

The Snow Country Hunting Life of the Northern Nobleman and the Raptor Wife 北欧貴族と猛禽妻の雪国狩 り暮らし

Volume 2 - The Honeymoon of the Northern Nobleman and the Raptor Wife

Written by Emoto Mashimesa (江本マシメサ)

Illustrator by Akaneko (あかねこ)

Credits



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Translated by [Kudarajin](#)

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Chapter 53 - Sieglinde's Activity Diary

Today, we are travelling to my country.

We will spend about two days on a boat, and move by carriage to the capital.

From the first day to the third day, we will participate in the ball.

For the last day, we will stay inside and then return home.

For this trip, we spent some time busily for it. I already had expected that Ritzhard won't rest even in the boat.

"Ritz, why don't you take a break?"

"Nn, just a bit more. Thanks."

"....."

Ritz was doing the finishing touches on the wooden reindeer that was to be gifted to my family. He's been doing it for three hours after the boat departed.

"I thought that was complete."

"I thought so too, but on second look, it still had flaws, so I just had to fix them."

With a knife, he was smoothing out the already grand antlers. He delicately carved the wood silently.

I can stare at him working with a serious face for so many hours, but worrying too much is one of his bad points.

"Ritz, let's go buy some alcohol."

".....Okay."

For now, I managed to make him stop working.

On the ship, there is a shop selling some stuff.

Though I'm not sure why they sell more alcohol than food.

There are wheat spirits (Korn), black tea liqueur (Tiffin), many different types of wine, beer and also many drinks from my homeland.

"Sieg, what's that?"

"A cocktail of herbs, spices and fruit alcohol (liqueur)"

"Hehh."

What I had in my hand is Jägermeister.

It's both bitter and subtly sweet at the same time, and it even has herbs used for medicine so it is said to be good for health.

"This might be a bit strong for Ritz."

"I see. But, I want to try something different for a change."

"Then, how about noble rot wine (edelfäule wein)?"

Noble rot wine (edelfäule wein) is one of the sweetest alcoholic beverages in the world, made from raisins. It's not very sour, and has a deep sweet taste, with a smooth scent like honey. Even people weak to alcohol liked this drink.

"Then I'll have that."

"Good choice."

We also bought snacks that went well with alcohol.

Cheese, chocolate, boiled eggs, smoked bird meat, dried fruits.

After buying alcohol, we went back to our cabin.

I sat on the bed, dragged the small round table close and served the snacks on a plate. Then, I took out glasses from the shelf and poured alcohol.

“Uwa, it’s red!!”

Jägermeister is red like blood. It’s strong, but it’s clean.

What Ritz was having had a beautiful amber shade. When I tried a sip, I ended up frowning from the sweet taste. I like sweet snacks, but I prefer my alcohol dry.

I turned towards the snacks on the plate.

Realising my gaze, Ritz looked at me while getting something from the plate.

“Chocolate?”

Before I could answer, he pushed it into my mouth.

Sweet. But it went well with the flavour of the alcohol still left in my mouth.

And I could also feel myself heating up.

“Sieg, what’s wrong? Was the chocolate not good?”

“.....No”

I ended up remembering the thing that happened before so I hid my mouth, but Ritz unexpectedly leaned in closer.

“Sieg?”

“Nothing. The chocolate was normally good too.”

“I see. Then what’s this hand for?”

“.....Nothing.”

When I said that, he softly grabbed my wrist and moved my hand away from my mouth.

A moment later, we were locking our lips.

The lips were warm, making me feel fuzzy.

.....Somehow, it became a ridiculously sweet mouthful.



As for the rest of the trip, we spent time playing games, watching the sea on the decks, drinking alcohol and chatting together. Time passed quickly.

When I was on the boat trip from my homeland, I remember being very bored. However, with Ritz, it was so fun.

A few hours before the disembarking time, I started dressing up. My family had sent me a dress.

I took off the men’s clothes I was used to and reached out to an undergarment.

“.....”

It was structured so that it was tied at the waist. I couldn't do it alone.

".....Ritz"

"Yes?"

I spoke to Ritz who was sitting across from me on the bed.

"....."

"Sieg, what's wrong?"

"No, well, erm, I might want some help."

"What?"

"Can you tie the undergarment string behind me?"

Ritz casually agreed.

Corsets do not only tighten one's waist, but also make women's breasts look beautiful. I untied the strings and placed my breasts well, above the thick steel wires in the corset.

Then, all that was left is to tie it from the back.

The dextrous Ritz deftly tied the string.

"Sieg, it doesn't hurt, does it?"

"I'm alright."

However, there was a problem. The dress waist part was a bit tight.

I only recently discovered it. The strings have to be tightened as much as possible.

“.....Ritz,”

“What is it?”

“I have a wish.”

“Okay.”

“Can you tighten the strings a lot?”

“Why? It’s not good for your body.”

“.....”

The new diet consisting mostly of meat made my body fit for the snow country.

I wonder where the muscles that covered my body went. Now they’re being protected by layers of fat.

When I told that sad story to Ritz, he reluctantly sympathised with me.

I put both hands on the wall and strained my feet.

“Then, here I go.”

“Yes.”

That moment, the string pulled around tightly, but it didn’t feel like it was enough.

It’s not possible to wear the dress like this.

“A bit more.”

“Sieg, that’s,”

“Do as I say.”

“.....Okay.”

The second coming of pressure. This time it was somewhat hard to breathe.

“Sieg, is this alright?”

“A little, more.”

“This is the last time.”

The string contracted tightly around my body.

“.....Ku!”

I was clenching my teeth, but my voice spilled out.

Once the sound of the string tightening was no longer there, I let out a sigh of relief.

Thanks to Ritzhard, I was able to wear the dress naturally.

I then went to the washing basin to put on makeup. I put on hair extensions, and hid my face a little with a hat. As I looked into the mirror, I thought that this way I would at least be seen as a woman.

The dress too was designed along the lines of the body, without much exposed areas or decorations, so it was better than the dress full of frills and exposed areas that I got from my family before.

Once I finished dressing up, I went out of the bathroom.

“Uwa!! Sieg, you look cute——!!”

Ritzhard reacted as I expected he would.

“.....”

“What’s wrong?”

“That, appearance is,”

“It’s the foreign clothes that grandfather gave me.”

A squared-shaped fluffy white hat, and a fluffy coat. The black trousers and the black boots accented the white nicely.

In the middle of the room, there was a snow fairy.

I ended up feeling lost whether to feel regretful that my husband was much cuter than me or to sincerely appreciate it.



Chapter 54 - Sieglinde's Activity Report No. 2

We arrived at a port of my homeland a little after noon. Being one of the biggest port cities in the country, it was crowded with people.

"Sieg, what about lunch?"

"Let's see....."

We had about an hour and half until our carriage ride. The restaurants probably are crowded.

"Let's grab something from the marketplace."

"That might work."

The market at the port city had many goods, truly worthy of its title 'Gateway of Food'.

"It really is the season of harvest."

"Indeed."

The fruit store near the entrance had mountains of autumn fruits. Ritz let out cries of joy.

Apricots, peaches, pears, apples. We were surrounded in a sweet scent. Ritzhard bought two green apples.

Then, we casually went around many stores, such as a vegetables store, a flower shop, an alcohol shop and a sundries shop.

Finally, we arrived in a street that had many stalls selling food. First, we went to the bakery.

"Hehh, there are many different kinds of bread."

“From big ones to small ones, I heard that there are approximately thousand different kinds.”

Since he didn't know what to choose, we bought something called knoten, which looked as if long strips were just put together.

Also, we couldn't forget sausage. Most people around us were eating one with yellow powder that had a spicy taste. These are popular at stalls.

Finally, we bought coffee and sat down at the wooden chairs at the town square.

Because we heated up the knoten bread, I could feel warmth from the paper wrapping, and when we split the bread in two it was emitting a bit of steam.

When I bit in, it had a soft texture and a subtle sweet flavour.

I used to prefer harder bread that had firm chewing taste, but as I had bread that Ritz requested the lady of the Rango family to make, I came to like soft bread.

The currywurst was cut so that it was easy to eat, and it was on skewers.

It has tomato sauce on top, so there's just the right amount of spiciness and sourness.

Grilled until its crisp, when bit into the outside crunched nicely. The roughly ground meat overflowed with meaty juices.

“Sieg, this is amazing.”

“I'm glad you like it.”

As for dessert, I had one of the apples we bought. They were a bit hard, but it wasn't too bad.

Ritz too had an apple. Then he said one thing.

“Uwa, sour!”

“?”

Maybe he had an unripe apple. Or maybe the apple is of that sort. It was indeed sour, but not inedible.

“Sieg, is your apple sweet?”

While placing the apple on his knee and looking like he has no appetite, Ritzhard asked.

“No, it’s not sweet, but it’s not too sour to be inedible.”

After asking if he wanted a bite, I handed over the apple to Ritz.

He took one bite, and the next moment his face contorted.

“This is sour too!!”

“That’s unfortunate.”

“Huh, Sieg, did you like sour fruits?”

“.....No not really.”

The apples in this country are taste sourer compared to other apples. So I was used to the sour flavour, but it felt different today. My body too was different from usual. This peculiar feeling could be that.

“S-Sieg, c-could it be!?”

“Wait, calm down. We won’t know until we see the doctor.”

Suddenly growing restless, Ritz advised that I should take my corset off.

“If I take the time to take my corset off, we’ll miss the carriage, and I won’t fit back into my clothes. It’s not that bad, so just be patient for a bit.”

It takes about an hour by carriage to the capital. It’s not that long. After we arrived, we went to Ritz’s father’s family house to offer a greeting. We received a passionate welcome from grandfather-in-law who came out wearing bear fur. Then, we said that we had business in the city and headed to the hospital.

The doctor diagnosed us, but because the only information we had was that I could eat sour food, so we couldn’t conclude anything.

I didn’t like sweet things to begin with, so it didn’t help.

“Well, it’s like this, so it might be best to not tell grandfather-in-law yet.”

“Alright.”

It seems that it’s possible to know by hearing the pulses using a stethoscope five months in, but the doctors said that it was uncertain in this period.

In five months time, the belly will start getting big so I might know then.

Anyhow, since it was an uncertain piece of information, I warned Ritzhard to not get too excited.

So I was warning my agitated husband like that, but after I had meat with red wine sauce for dinner, I suddenly felt queasy and left the seat.

.....Probably the so called morning sickness.

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner!”

After dinner, grandfather-in-law was trying to call over a doctor out of worry so the two of us had to stop him.

“Even the doctor said that it’s uncertain whether it really is pregnancy.”

When Ritzhard explained the details, grandfather-in-law also understood.

“I see. So can I be happy that you are now a real couple?”

I recalled that our relationship back then was found out by grandfather-in-law.

“Grandfather-in-law, back then,”

“Don’t worry. The one who’s bad is my grandson who is dense to death.”

Ritzhard made a face as if he was getting punished. To that, grandfather-in-law said, “Are you a scolded dog or something!”



For the ball on the second day, grandfather-in-law prepared a comfortable dress that did not strain the body. That’s my homeland. I could find what I needed ready-made.

When I went inside, my noble title was recited.

Countess Revontulet, they said.

Every time I attended these balls, I was surrounded by young ladies, but this time no one approached. Though I can feel glances.

Then I greeted many acquaintances. Everyone was surprised at my change.

“Well, your appearance changed, but your personality became softer too.”

Hearing them say that, I became curious at just how menacing I was then.

Emmerich didn't come. When I asked a soldier I knew, he told me that Emmerich went straight home after work because he has a new wife back home.

I talked to some other acquaintances.

Everyone was surprised at my appearance.

Finally, I talked with Ritzhard's friend. He sincerely congratulated this sudden marriage that was decided a year ago.

After greeting people, I moved to a corner and got some fruit juice. Because there was the possibility that I was pregnant, I decided that I won't have alcohol.

“Shall we celebrate?”

While spinning the glass in his hand, he gazed at my belly.

“It's still uncertain.”

“But still.”

To my emotionless words, Ritz dropped his shoulders.

However, it was not as though I didn't feel anything.

"Well, shall we celebrate just in case?"

"I"

I lifted the glass and gave a toast.

"To new family."

The glasses struck each other with a clear clang. The drink I had was amazing, and was unlike anything I had before.

Until the month that my belly would start getting bigger and that it would become certain that I had a child, Ritzhard and I spent the months restlessly.

The new life would be born many months later, but we were already dreaming of the baby.

Chapter 55 - Sweet & Sour Cake

It's already been three days since we arrived at Sieg's homeland. Today, the three of us, grandfather, Sieg and me, are going to out together. At night, we will visit Emmerich and Aina.

In the living room, Sieg and I waited for grandfather to finish dressing up.

Today, Sieg's clothes were tightened below her breast, but put on strain on the belly. It was a mild dress. Of course, this was prepared by grandfather for Sieg who might be pregnant.

Yes. She might have a baby in her belly. It wasn't certain yet, but just from thinking about it my heart beat faster and I grew restless.

It seems that it showed on my face when I grew careless, so I was warned by Sieg many times.

Her crimson hair was tied into one. Her hair had some natural curls, so it was tied into a round shape. I slowly observed her, thinking that her hair grew quite a bit during the past year.

Because I wasn't glancing but looking straight at her, I was pointed out by Sieg.

"What is it?"

"No, I just thought that my wife is really lovely."

".....I don't want to hear that from you."

"What do you mean by that?"

".....I invoke my right to remain silent."

"?"

I asked her what it was, but Sieg crossed her arms and shut her mouth with a frown. Well no matter. I sipped some coffee, which had gone cold.

“By the way, grandfather wouldn’t wear bear fur, right?”

“Surely he wouldn’t?”

Grandfather really liked the bear fur coat we gave him. Every time he had the chance he wore it, wearing it like a cape as Teoporon did, and imitating his actions cheerfully.

While we were chatting, grandfather came out of his room.

He wore neat clothes for going out.

“I made you wait.”

To grandfather who said that, I waved no.

It was just that Sieg and I were uselessly fast.

“Grandfather-in-law, where will we go today?”

“I’ll leave that fun for later.”

“Is that so.”

While getting dragged along by grandfather, Sieg asked awkwardly.

Now, let’s go! With that line from grandfather, our fun trip began.

Grandfather took Sieg’s arm and declared himself her escort. He looked at me and asked, “Want an arm?” with a mischievous smile, but I respectfully declined.

On our carriage, while watching steam cars pass by, we soon arrived at our destination.

“Grandfather, this is?”

“The biggest zoo in the world.”

“Hehh!”

The huge facility named after the capital was created some decades ago, and it apparently is one of the biggest facilities in the world. As soon as we went in we were greeted by a gate that was supported by two statues that had far eastern cultural designs. I was awed.

The vegetation was thick, and the animals were relaxing about.

There were animals that I never saw before, so I ended up asking many questions to grandfather.

“Grandfather, what’s that!?”

“What, you don’t know monkeys.”

There were so many unknown animals in the zoo. It was full of surprises.

Sieg apparently came here a few times with her family. She was dependable.

What I was most surprised about was the white bear exhibition. I tilted my head because it was different from the white bears back home.

“These are polar bears.”

“H~m.”

On the information plaque, it says that polar bears live on the seas in the arctics.

I heard the information from father so it wasn’t that surprising, but I was curious because it was different from the white bear I saw in the forest with Teoporon. It was also strange that it lived in the forest but did not hibernate.

“Oi, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

I decided to not to think to much about them and continued on.

After we finished looking around the zoo, we went to a store for lunch and went home.

After we returned, Sieg and I just rested. Tonight we have an appointment with Emmerich. So we don't have anything else to do.

Grandfather went out because he had work. He bequeathed his title over to uncle, but he's still busy, or so the butler said.

“Sieg, I'm going out for a bit.”

“Where to?”

“To buy confectionaries for Emmerich.”

After saying that, I stood up, but my coat was grabbed.

“Nn?”

“I'll go too, so wait a bit. I'll go fix my makeup.”

“Sieg, please stay home.”

The zoo was big, so you must be tired, I said.

“Why are you leaving me.”

“Because.....”

We walked around quite a bit. I didn't want her to push herself.

"I don't want you to go alone."

"Even if you say that, I can speak the language and I'm used to the streets."

".....It's different. That's not what I mean."

".....Then?"

Sieg hunched and looked up here.

I wonder what my wife is being shy about.

I grabbed Sieg's hand.

"What is it, Sieglinde."

"....."

"I won't know unless you tell me."

I touched Sieg's cheeks and turned her head towards me.

She was frowning, so I caressed her cheeks to make her feel better.

A while later, her frown disappeared and she returned to the usual Sieg.

"So, what is it?"

"Well, it's not that important, just,"

"Just?"

"A young woman was looking at Ritz at the zoo."

"Eh, that's all!?"

"....."

“Were you ashamed because I was like a country bumpkin!?”

“No, stupid!”

“Eh?”

“.....”

I was slapped lightly, but I was still clueless.

“You look at an attractive person of the opposite sex, right!? It’s that!!”

“Ah~”

I forgot. That I was handsome here.

“So you were worried that a woman would whisk me away if I went out alone! I see!”

“.....”

I did propose to Sieg because I fell in love at first sight so it might be natural that she’s worried.

However, after I married, no other women came into my sight. I want to tell her this, but it’s probably hard to convince her.

“M~m”

“.....”

“After I married, I could only see Sieg though.”

“!”

Her grey eyes opened wide.

“.....Indeed, there were many pretty ladies at the ball, but Ritz did not look at any of them.”

“See?”

It seemed that Sieg did see that. How thankful.

“Then, there’s nothing to worry about, right?”

“.....”

I wondered if she was convinced, but seeing her face it didn’t seem like that.

I can’t leave with Sieg like that, I thought.

“Don’t make that face, Sieg.”

“What kind of face.”

“.....Somehow provocative face.”

“.....”

But there was the possibility of her being pregnant so I can’t knock her over now.

“Okay!”

“?”

I clapped.

“Let’s make a simple confectionary as a gift! Sieg, you can help too!”

“!”

I grabbed her hand and pulled her up.

“Sieg, what’s your favourite?”

“Fresh berry cake made by Ritz.”

“.....”

Hearing her say that with a serious expression, I became embarrassed.

“There aren’t any fresh berries in this season, so something else please.”

“Then there is a confectionary of this country, called ‘Black Forest cake (Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte)’”

It seems that the confectionary Sieg is talking about is made using cherry liqueur. If it’s this, I can make this by getting the recipe from the people in the kitchen.

In the kitchen, all the ingredients were prepared and a patissier was there to help us. While receiving instructions, we started making them.

First, for the cake sponge, we whipped egg whites to make something fluffy. Chocolate was mixed in as well.

While the dough was being baked, we boiled alcohol and sugar to make syrup, mixed alcohol into a bottle full of cherries for flavour and made cream.

Once the cake was baked, we sliced it with a knife. The cakes back home had a heavier texture, but here the cakes are soft and fluffy.

Using the leftover heat, a layer was soaked in cherry alcohol syrup then left. Afterwards, we spread cream on top, placed cherries on that and then covered it with cream again. Another layer was placed on top, then pasted with cream so that the joint won’t be seen.

Finally, cream and cherry was placed on top, and it's finished by placing on chocolate shavings that look like bark chips.

"Looks pretty nice."

"Aa, looks delicious."

We wrapped it up and took it too Emmerich and Aina's house.

The four of us shared it together, and it was really nice.

It was soft and moist thanks to the cherry liqueur. The deep flavour of the chocolate and the sour taste of cherries went strangely well.

Aina wanted to learn how to make it, so I taught her. Meanwhile, Sieg and Emmerich were talking about past stuff.

The fun night passed by quickly.

Chapter 56 - The Couple, Together and Separated.

The fourth day. We prepared to go to Sieg's hometown, and left after having breakfast.

Grandfather saw us out. While wearing bear fur.

"I prepared a carriage that doesn't put much strain on the body."

"Grandfather."

"Thank you for your concern."

To Sieg who might have a baby, grandfather was kind.

"Next time, let us watch the foxfires or something together."

"When it gets warmer."

"I'll look forward to our next meeting."

The two of us bowed and left the Marquess's mansion.

In the carriage, blankets and cushions to reduce the impact were prepared. How thankful, I thought as I locked my gaze with Sieg's.

It took about three hours by carriage to Sieg's hometown.

"Sieg, do you want to lie down until we arrive?"

"Aa, right."

On the first day, she had morning sickness so Sieg had a really tough time. She couldn't have her favourite food, and she was a bit emotionally unstable. The doctor that visited last night said such things are commonly seen in the early phase of pregnancy.

"Sieg, here."

Sometimes, the carriage wheels can bump into rocks making the carriage shake. So, thinking that I had to support her body while she slept, I gestured for her to use my lap as a pillow.

I laid a sheet on my laps and told Sieg to lie down.

"Is it alright?"

"Please go ahead."

Sieg lied down, so I covered her with a blanket. Then I signalled the driver to start moving.

For some time, maybe because she was unused to such a situation, her body was stiff, but after I caressed her for some time, her eyes closed and she started making soft breathing sounds.

Moving for long periods of time, travelling, was not recommendable for pregnant women, but she did get better after the first day, so the doctor said to just not put a strain on her.

We decided that we won't tell Sieg's parents yet. We couldn't say for sure if there really is a child so that's why we decided so.

Grandfather suggested that we rest at his house until her condition is better. However, a letter from Sieg's house arrived, saying, "Looking forward to the meeting". When I told grandfather that we shouldn't change our schedule like that, he too acquiesced.

Four hours later. We had been moving slowly, resting many times on the way for Sieg.

Because we arrived later than expected, it seemed that the Wattins were worried.

“We just took it slowly, enjoying the scenery.”

“Is that so, my lady.”

“I’m no longer ‘my lady.’”

“Ah, indeed.”

The elderly butler was someone who served House Wattin since Sieg was young, so he said that he ended up saying that from habit, while smiling bitterly. That butler then guided us to the drawing room where hot coffee was served.

After the butler left, we sighed that we arrived safely at her home.

“Sorry it’s disorderly here.”

“No, not at all.”

While chatting, Sieg only enjoyed the smell of the coffee but did not sip it, just holding cup the cup.

“Pregnancy has surprisingly many limits.”

“Indeed.”

Last night, we heard things that shouldn’t be eaten during pregnancy, and the two of us were surprised at the amount.

Coffee too was one of them.

It didn't matter if it was just a little, but Sieg thought that shouldn't have any.

"Even so....."

"?"

She looked over here with a serious expression. When I asked her what it was, she replied that the lap pillow was good.

"How should I say it, it feels good to sleep while feeling someone else's warmth."

"Yeah. It feels nice to sleep together on cold nights."

"Indeed."

We laughed while talking about trivial things.

Our life together was good.

So I did think that all was still good even if she wasn't pregnant.

As Sieg was pouring fruit juice into a cup, the door opened with great force.

The person who opened the door was Sieg's energetic nephew, Claus.

"Oi, you arrived, gra.....!?"

Because of Sieg's instantaneous glare, Claus was cut off. Diffidently, he started talking.

"Erm, grandpa, I mean, dearest grandfather wishes to talk a bit with gra..... er, aunt."

“Father does?”

Claus nodded.

“Alright. Claus, be with Ritzhard in the meanwhile.”

“.....”

“Where’s the reply!?”

“Y-Yep.”

Claus was left in the room with me. For some reason, I felt sorry for him.

“Why don’t you take a seat?”

“.....Yes.”

I held out the cup of juice and recommended him to sit down.

“You grew big in such a short time.”

“Thank, you.”

Claus turned 13 this year, I think? It’s an age where interacting with adults is hard. I took care to not make him nervous.

He talked about school.

Apparently, Claus is in the school club for tennis, a sports that is played by hitting the ball with a racket.

“I got an award in the last competition.....”

He started because Sieg taught him tennis when he was little. However, for the past few years, Sieg only taught for short intervals and did not spend much time with him.

“Tennis, I could do it well so I wanted to show her, but she always said that she was busy, so to draw her attention.....”

That was why he was calling Sieg granny. Well, what should I say, I do know how it feels to want to tease a girl one likes.

“However, I was surprised to see aunt today.”

“Surprised?”

“.....She was well, womanly now.”

Indeed. Sieg became prettier every day. So one must be surprised to suddenly see such a change.

“It’s been a year since she started living in the forest, so we were thinking that she might have become like a wild beast, heavier than before.”

“That’s”

It seems that they’re thinking that we’re a tribe eating raw meat.

Mm, our people did eat raw reindeer meat and drink their blood, leading nomadic lives, but now our life isn’t that different from the capital.

Not a long time later, Sieg returned to the room.

“Claus, you weren’t being rude, I hope?”

“I-I wasn’t!”

While looking at Claus who couldn't look straight at Sieg, I told her that he had been a very good boy.

Then Sieg's parents came as well.

"Ritzhard-kun, I'm thankful that you came all this way."

"Yes, indeed!"

Sieg's mother and father too were happy to see Sieg again after a long time.

Claus said that adult talk was boring and then exited the room.

"My, I was surprised at my daughter's change!"

"Indeed, I never thought that I would see my daughter so feminine and plump."

"Father, Mother, surely you exaggerate."

Mother-in-law wiped her tears with a handkerchief.

"It's a good timing, so let us have a meal now."

When mother-in-law rang the bell in her hand, servants came in the room to prepare the meal.

Today, they said that they prepared what Sieg likes. Hearing that, her expression went stiff.

For the last few days, she said that she didn't want meat that had fat, so we led a lifestyle centred around fruits, vegetables, and light meat dishes.

Pregnancy changed how food tasted, so Sieg was avoiding heavy meat dishes.

When she was in the military, she had a lot of grilled meat for strength. She was nervous that such dishes would be served today.

I patted Sieg on the back to reassure her.

First came the aperitifs. Sparkling wine. Sieg told the servant that she preferred water.

Next came appetisers. Mashed potatoes and ham with cheese, and root vegetable soup.

The main dish was grilled veal with red wine sauce.

But of course, as soon as that came out, Sieg pressed her mouth and stood up.

She stared for a while, but soon ran out. A maidservant who seemed to have realised the reason ran after her.

I pondered what I should do, but her parents' surprised expression I decided that there was no reason to hide it from them.

"Erm, morning sickness."

"What!?"

"Well."

I was worried about Sieg, but for me to exit as well would be even more worrying, so I told everything while continuing to dine.

".....Or so they say."

"Is that so?"

"Sounds tough."

Modern medical science can only discern pregnancy after five months.

“Indeed, my intuition, shall I say..... well, I had thought that she might be. She’s gotten a bit plump after all.”

She really was a mother of ten. She told me that it was fine that we didn’t tell them.

“Giving birth back in your country?”

“.....No, we haven’t decided yet.”

The doctor discouraged travelling during pregnancy. So I had thought of leaving Sieg here and going home alone. However, this was not something I could decide on by myself.

After having lunch, I rushed over to Sieg who was resting in her room. She was sleeping. The servant said that she had some fruits then went to sleep. It seems that a doctor came over as well.

In the afternoon, father-in-law was going to take me to a lounge. I had to prepare. I kissed Sieg’s forehead and left the room.

In the lounges, me played card games, pool, drank alcohol and talked about world events, away from women. It was a rising resting place for gentlemen.

Father-in-law invited me to enjoy some alcohol.

“Nice place, isn’t it? You can drink however much you want here.”

“It’s like a secret base.”

“Indeed.”

Secret base, a place where children spend their time out of their parents’ sight. I knew the word, but I didn’t have the leisure to make such a base. I just said what I learned from books.

“Now then, let’s start off with a toast!”

“Alright.”

Father-in-law ordered dry black beer. I contentedly thought that the father and the daughter were very much alike.

“How is it?”

“A bit too strong. I prefer ales.”

“No. I mean about my daughter.”

“Ah, that?”

So it was about Sieg, not about the beer. How embarrassing.

Since it was a serious topic, I put down the glass and fixed my posture.

“Sieglinde-san is a lovely woman, someone that is more than I deserve.”

“Ha!?”

“Eh?”

“R-Really!? Are you sane!?”

“Yes, I’m not lying.”

Father-in-law looked bewildered and disbelieving. I told him again that it was true.

“.....No, sorry for suspecting you.”

Father-in-law invited me because he wanted to let my pent-up frustration out, but he was surprised at my response.

“Well..... my daughter was very strong and not a bit feminine. We, my family, all thought that she was in complete control in the marriage.”

“No, not really.”

Sieg is skilled in many things, but she never tried to do something better than me, her husband, nor did she try to force her stance on me. When there is a problem, we talked it out.

“I really am glad that my daughter is happy, and knows the joy of being a woman.”

“.....”

“However, I believe that it’s all thanks to Ritzhard-kun sacrificing himself.”

Father-in-law, just how were you seeing your own daughter.

Working in the military from when she was 13 to 31, Sieg may have never had the time to relax with her family, to know each other better.

While sipping alcohol, I talked about our life in the snow country. In the end, father-in-law also stated that he wanted to come, which made me happy.

We returned home late at night. When I realised it, we were talking very enthusiastically.

When I heard that Sieg was waiting for me from a servant, I panicked and ran over to her bedroom.

“Sieg, sorry, I just returned.”

“.....No, it’s fine.”

Sieg had her back on a backrest and was doing embroidery. Her complexion was better than before, so I felt relieved.

“So we were found out.”

“Yeah. But that might have been for the best.”

“?”

After stroking Sieg’s head, I sat down next to her.

Then I told her what I had been thinking of.

“——Sieg, why don’t you spend some time here?”

“Eh!?”

Here, the doctors can come over quickly, along with midwives that had birth experience. She could also probably spend her time more comfortably than in the remote lands.

“I’ll be back in summer.”

“!?”

Well, if she turns out to be not pregnant, I can come in spring. Either way, I can’t take her to the extreme cold while she is weak.

“I-I don’t have any plans to rest here a long time.”

“There might be a child inside, I can’t let you ride a boat for two days.”

“.....”

The doctor said that miscarriages are possible in this phase, and there are no doctors on board. It will be bad if anything happened.

There are elderly people who knew a lot about giving birth, but the chances of them helping Sieg is low.

“I’m sad to be split from you, but not having you for the rest of my life is more painful.”

“.....”

Sieg accepted it.

“I’ll write letters.”

“.....Yeah.”

Her dejected expression made me feel pained as well.

However, this was for the best. I can’t push her to go back and possibly lose a life.

“Are you going back tomorrow morning?”

“.....Yeah.”

There’s probably mountains of work to do back home. There isn’t that much work to do as a lord, but things do pile up when I leave the house for a few days.

“I wonder how I can get rid of this fear.”

“Sieg, I’m sorry.”

“No, you didn’t make a wrong decision.”

I distressed over how I could calm her trembling grey eyes, but the right words did not come out.

“What should I say, I’m surprised myself. It seems that I relied on Ritz quite a bit.”

“That’s not true. You were doing well in foreign lands.”

“Then why is this parting so painful?”

“!”

I hugged Sieg tightly. For me right now, this was the best I could do to console her.

While I was hugging her and patting her back, someone knocked on the doors.

When I opened the door, a servant delivered a letter to me.

The sender as grandfather. It was an express delivery. When I opened the envelope while worrying that something bad might have happened, something absurd was written on it.

—— My son and his wife, I captured your parents. How should I cook them up?

It seems that grandfather found father and mother who were missing.

Chapter 57 - Parents, Punishment!?

— My missing parents are captured after a decade!? What's more, I can cook them up however I want!?

“Ritz, what happened?”

“!”

I had been absent-minded, imagining about how I should cook my parents up.

“Ah, sorry, I was just surprised.”

“?”

I folded up grandfather's unsettling letter and put in the inner pocket of my coat. I then explained everything to Sieg who was watching worriedly.

“It's a letter from grandfather, saying that my parents are found.”

“I see.”

I wonder what this is. I don't know whether to be feel good or bad. Sieg too seemed confused about what we should do.

“Hm. What should I do.”

Right now, there are no carriages. I don't know how to ride horses, so I can't hire a horse either.

Maybe it might be best to go next morning and take my parents to my village. If possible, I want to go right now, but I can't bother Sieg's family.

My thoughts may have shown on my face, because Sieg then suggested something.

“Ritz, why don’t I ask my father for a carriage?”

“Eh, no, it’s alright. It’s not like they can escape from grandfather so tomorrow’s fine.”

“But, aren’t you worried?”

“.....”

Worried, right. There’s grandfather who’s at the climax of frustration, and my parents who don’t realise the graveness of the situation.

I’m more worried about grandfather. He might faint from high blood pressure at this rate.

“You don’t have to refuse. We’re family, aren’t we?”

“Thank you. Then, please ask father-in-law.”

“Alright.”

We moved to the living room and asked father-in-law for a carriage.

“That’s a piece of cake.”

“Thank you.”

The preparations proceeded smoothly, and it was soon time to head to the capital.

Father-in-law too understood what I meant by making Sieg rest here. Now I could rest easy.

“Sorry, things became hectic now.”

“No, it’s alright.”

I felt that I won’t be able to catch my boat tomorrow, so I promised to come back here tomorrow.

“Then, see you later.”

“.....Yeah.”

I kissed Sieg, who came out to the front entrance, on the cheek and left.

If I dally here she'll be staying outside in the cold.

Three hours after I parted with Sieg.

When the day turned over to a new day, I arrived at the marquess's mansion.

“Welcome, Ritzhard-sama.”

“Sorry for coming at such a late hour.”

“It's nothing, sir.”

I left my coat and hat to the servant and rushed over to where my parents were.

According to the butler, they were waiting without sleeping because I might come.

The butler opened the doors for me and I went inside.

“——Father, mother!”

My parents were there.

“My, Ritchan.”

“Waa, Haru-kun, long time no see.”

“.....”

See their unchanging relaxed nature, any ill will disappeared.

By the way, father calls me 'Haru-kun', because he called my maternal grandfather who had a similar name (※ Rikhard) 'Haru-san'. When grandfather was still alive, father called him with 'kun' many times.

My father was in a weird posture.

"Why are you like that....."

"Father told me to reflect on my actions all night."

".....Alright."

Father was kneeling on the stone floor with both knees folded. It seems that it's a posture for reflecting in some faraway country. Mother stood behind him with a face that said, 'How troubling~'.

Then I asked what I always wanted to ask.

"Just where were you?"

"Sorry, Ritchan, mum and dad were lost. Even though we wanted to, we couldn't get back home~"

".....I see."

I sort of expected that. Well, I was never inconvenienced from the fact that my parents weren't there, so I didn't really have anything to condemn them about.

"Still, I'm happy that you're healthy~"

"Mother and father, you look healthy too."

"Indeed, we're very healthy! Anyway, Ritchan, you seem to be doing well, and you're an adult now, I'm glad."

“Right. Your face is that of an adult now.”

Well, I did age during a decade, and I had responsibilities as well. Ten years would change a person a lot.

We now learned what we wanted from each other, so we fell silent after that.

A while later, warm tea was served. Then, the door opened with great force.

“Ritzhard, you arrived?!”

“Grandfather.....”

Grandfather came into the room wearing pyjamas and a coat.

It looks like he was waiting for me. I felt sorry.

He looked at father with an expression that said, ‘How ridiculous,’ then he started talking.

“Oi, I caught your parents. Do whatever you want.”

“.....Ah, thank you.”

Even if he says to do whatever I want, it’s troubling. I don’t really feel anger or resentment towards my parents.

“Why aren’t you doing anything!? You’re going to feel much better if you hit my idiot son at least once, no!?”

“But that’s a bit.”

“You’re not angry!? Even after seeing your parents who forced the position of a lord on you and abandoned you for a decade!?”

“N~n.”

Grandfather was trembling from rage, but I did not have that emotion, which was weird. Most people would get enraged.

“Ritzhard, let out your anger on that man loafing around!”

“Erm, what should I do.”

I strongly wished to live up grandfather’s expectations, but I still had no reason to hurt someone.

“Nuu! Richelle, why is your son, so, kind!”

With a frustrated expression, grandfather complained to Richelle — to mother.

“Dearest father-in-law, we were taught to ‘not rely on others’ by father from a young age, so Ritchan doesn’t think to rely on us a single bit, which is why he’s not angry~”

That might be true. I didn’t expect anything from father or mother.

I could say the same for any others, but then I realised that there was an exception.

Sieglinde. In all senses of the meaning, she was the only woman I could rely on. I felt happy that I realised I had someone like that.

I felt refreshed to know how I felt about my parents, but that was only me. Grandfather was shaking and holding his head.

“Uwaaa!! I can’t bear it anymore!”

“Grandfather?”

“You, you idiot of a son!! You’re the root of all evils!!”

After saying that, grandfather slapped father with all his might.

Father rolled on the floor, and mother chased after him slowly while saying, “Oh my oh my~”.

“I should at least do this to feel better! Ritzhard, make this idiot son the lord! Then you’ll be living here for some time.”

“Ah, that might be nice.”

“Being so soft aga— ha!? ——This easily, really!?”

Grandfather ended up being surprised and questioned me.

“Truth be told, Sieg’s condition wasn’t very good, so I was planning on leaving her here until the child is born, but leaving her alone makes me feels anxious and lonely.”

“R-Right!”

Grandfather ran over to father and gave him a kick.

“Oi, you heard, right?!?”

“.....D-Dad, I have something I want to ask before that.”

“What? I’ll tell you this now, but you have no right to refuse!”

“That’s, well, yeah. Alright. Probably.”

What father was curious about was Sieg.

“Sieglinde is Ritzhard’s wife.”

“Hehh~ Haru-kun, you married~”

“My my, Ritchan, is that so~”

My parents didn't react that surprised to their son's marriage. Well, I did expect this though.

In this unchanging relaxed mood, grandfather concluded the story.

"Let's rest for today. You stay here and reflect. Richelle, you can go rest in a bedroom."

"Well, father-in-law, it's alright. I'll stay here."

"I can't let you do that."

"No, it's paradise here. It's not cold, nor are there any beasts."

"....."

Grandfather ordered only father to sleep on the hard floor, but mother insisted that she'll stay. In the end, grandfather yielded and gave a blanket for mother.

The next day. We left early to go the Wattins' mansion. Not only did my parents accompany me, but my grandfather came as well.

"You moron son, don't say anything needless there, alright?"

"Yessir~"

"Tighten the end!"

"Ye~s"

"Don't extend it in the middle either!!"

"Alright alright."

"Don't say it quickly, and don't say it twice you idiot."

"This is hard."

"....."

Thinking that it was a waste or something, grandfather poked father's pinky finger, but father happily said, "This is good for my shoulder pains~"

The mood was a mess, but at least the plan was decided.

Either way, we have to go back to my country and write a paper to delegate my duty as a lord. Then I have to ask the martial race family to take care of my parents, and prepare for the polar nights.

"It's fine about preparing for the polar nights~ Mum's used to it."

"Ah, I see."

Mum was good at hunting small animals. She knows how to preserve food and how to make handicrafts, so I probably didn't have to worry about that.

The problem was my father's ability as a lord.

Since he did receive education, he probably would be fine regarding administering the realm, but I'm worried about how he would interact with the villagers or the soldiers in the fortress.

"Father, will you be alright being the lord?"

"It's alright, alright~ probably."

"....."

Seeing father all smiles, I could understand painfully well why grandfather gave up on the education for being a lord on his son-in-law.

As I grabbed my brows, mother tugged at my sleeves.

"Ritchan, don't worry. If anything goes wrong, we'll apologise~"

".....Right."

I felt worried.

While I was still distressed, the carriage departed.

Grandfather kept lecturing father about what it was to be a lord, but I'm not sure if that got through.



Three hours later, we arrived at the Wattins' mansion.

Mother prepared a simple gift. The basket has a berry pie she baked. Of course, we couldn't get fresh berries, so she baked it using jam and syrup. She made it when I said Sieg liked berry pies.

"It would be nice if she likes it. But she's pregnant, so her taste might have changed."

"If that happens, let's eat all together."

"Alright."

Being scolded to not say anything needless, father was very docile.

It was the first time I saw wearing neat clothes. He was always wearing shabby clothes, and his hair was always unkempt. Seeing him wear dress suits, he did look like a dignified noble.

Mother too had a dress on. I was amazed at the fine embroidery on it.

The nice people of the house received my parents warmly. I'm really thankful.

From my grandfather's lead, father could only introduce himself and reply with short answers. However, thanks to that, the first meeting went well.

Sieg liked the pie mother made. She said that she was happy because she didn't have anything because of morning sickness.

Then, we talked about delegating the duties of a lord to father.

"After delegating my work to father, I'm thinking of spending time here until the child is born."

"That's a great idea!"

Fortunately, father-in-law agreed.

"I want to do some work here if possible."

"Then, won't you help with my ranch? We're lacking hands recently. Ah, that's if Ritzhard-kun wants to."

"If I can, please!"

"Great!"

Full of greenery, this region is also called the 'green heart'. Father-in-law, after retiring from the military, cultivated his private lands and was managing a ranch now.

It would take at least a month until I could come back here though. We'll taking the boat tomorrow evening. Father-in-law said that we should take spend the night here, so I graciously accepted his kindness.

Mother-in-law too said that a couple should spend time together, so I moved to the room that was prepared.

The moment the door closed, Sieg hugged from behind.

"Uwa!"

“Ritzhard!”

“W-What is it?”

“I’m happy.”

She said that was free from that anxiety of having to be alone, so she felt as though she could fly.

“We have to be split tomorrow though.”

“That much..... I can wait.”

“I see. That’s good.”

Then we chatted together until it was time to sleep.

The next morning, I left while making as little contact with Sieg as possible because it would be painful to part otherwise.

I returned to my country and taught my father the duties. Then I also checked all the houses for the polar nights. As I did that, I also informed the villagers that I was leaving the village for a bit and that my father was taking over for a bit.

The month passed by quickly.

Then it was the day I left for Sieg’s country.

“Then, Haru-kun, see you~. Give Sieglinde-san and her family my regards~.”

“Alright.”

“Ritchan, have this in the boat.”

“Thank you.”

Maybe it's because he's a lord now, he was wearing the traditional clothes that he said he didn't like neatly.

Mother too was moving a bit faster to support him.

“Father, mother, I leave the village in your care.”

“Leave it to me.”

“It will be alright~”

“.....”

Ah, it's worrisome after all!!

However, more importantly, I was worried about my wife.

Even as I apologised to the villagers in my head, I left for the foreign country.

Chapter 58 - Claus von Wattin's Activity Report

Having been a soldier for eighteen years, she had a sharp personality and was more popular with women.

She was tall for a woman, had a sharp gaze and looked valiant. According to the women, aunt was 'someone that fulfilled the dreams of women'.

I'm not sure, but the aunt I know is stoic, and if she talks it's to lecture me. Peckish. Not a bit feminine.

But she does play tennis well. That sort of person.

But then, even for aunt who was unfortunate as a woman, a change came. It's called marriage.

I did hear from mother that aunt was looking for a marriage partner, but I thought she wouldn't be able to find one. Even if she did, I thought that she would marry a man that kept divorcing or an old man. My family all thought that too.

My uncles were making bets on when she'll find a marriage partner. The consensus was that it would take about three to five years. While everyone was complaining that it didn't make much of a bet, a surprising news came from the capital.

My aunt's marriage was decided.

However, who it was was not written.

As everyone's expectations gathered, aunt brought over a foreign nobleman three years younger than her.

Everyone suspected that she forced him to marry. However, he called her by a nickname, and he didn't look scared of her. Also, he was a man of valour who treated aunt as a proper woman.

The foreign noble looks fluffy, but he's apparently a hunter living in the remote regions. Won't he fall over if he holds a gun, that's what I felt.

However, as I listened, I really did think that the place fit my gallant aunt.

Even after she left, my life did not change that much.

It might have been different if it was when I was living in the capital with mother, but now that I was enrolled in a school with a dormitory I didn't meet aunt that much. So I didn't feel lonely anyway.

But then, news came that aunt was returning home after a year. We all worried that she might have been divorced, but we were surprised that it was not that.

When we all gathered at the Wattins' mansion, everyone was thinking the same, and the topic of the day became aunt.

Everyone thought that she would return with thicker arms and bulging muscles, but when she returned with her husband the change was different.

When I went to the living room, thinking of saying 'granny', as well as attaching 'chased out', there was some madam there, and the usual crossdressing man was nowhere to be seen.

The person in front of me was my aunt for sure. I only knew one woman who had red hair like the sunset along with grey eyes.

The aunt I saw after a long time was very different. Before, she had short hair, an intimidating glare, and wore men's clothes. That was the crossdressing granny called Sieglinde.

However, today, aunt looked normal. She gained a bit of weight, and she looks softer now. Her short hair was now longer. And just where was she hiding those big breasts¹.

The people in the mansion were surprised about aunt's change as well.

My uncles and cousins all said that "her husband made her into a woman". I'm not sure what that means, but alright.

I wanted to talk with her marriage partner, but I didn't have the leisure to do so.

Another surprising news was delivered the next day.

Aunt might be pregnant with a baby.

Since it's not good for pregnant women to go on boats, aunt will stay here while her husband is returning to his country.

I was worried about many things, but I had to go back to the dormitory now. I wanted to say goodbye before I left, but the servant said that her condition was not good so I couldn't.

A week later, I visited the Wattins' mansion again.

According to grandmother, she's waiting for her stable period? I'm not sure, but she's being docile until the chance for a miscarriage becomes low. Until then, she can't move much.

So she can't play tennis, or so grandmother said. I'm not really here to play tennis though.

I was caught by grandfather. Then I helped with the ranch until night. How careless.

For dinner, the sausage we made during daytime was served. Maybe because I made it myself, it felt tastier than usual. Aunt too praised that it was good. I felt a bit happy.

¹ Armour.....

After that, I visited her three weeks later. Aunt was very bored.

“What, this ain’t like you!”

“Claus, speak more politely.”

“.....”

Even when I said something rude, she just let me off with a soft warning. She’s so different from usual, it’s strange.

“It looks like you’ve become docile thanks to your husband’s love.”

“I wonder. How was I anyway?”

Aunt.

Always having a frown, with an aura that seemed to declare everyone around her as an enemy.

“What’s that.”

“Since everyone who saw auntie said that you were scary.”

“Well, that can’t be helped. I never had an ally I opened up to. In the military that only had men, one mistake and I would be criticised, and people would denounce me for being a woman if I ever failed, so I had no leisure to be relaxed.”

“.....”

I wonder if she couldn’t find rest even amongst family. What a lonely life, I thought.

However, it’s different now. Anyone can tell. Aunt found someone she could rely on, and was now living in peace.

“Sorry for saying that it wasn’t like you.”

“Really?”

“I like you better now.”

When I said that, aunt smiled with a bright expression that I never saw before.

I felt embarrassed somehow, that I said something rude again.

“What a relief. There wasn’t even a trace of it, but your husband made you into a woman in just a year.”

“What did you say!?”

“!”

Her soft expression disappeared, and she narrowed her eyes.

“Where did you hear that!”

“M-My, uncles, I, guess.”

“Hoh, so my brothers said that.”

“Y-Yes. W-Without a doubt.”

“I see.”

“.....”

I lost to her intimidating aura and ended up blurting everything out.

Since it’s winter vacation from today, my uncles are also coming back here.

It’s going to be very uncomfortable. I ended up shuddering even though it wasn’t me.

During dinner, my uncles had a dark expression, as grandmother asked what was wrong. However, aunt glared at them so no one could say anything.

Just who is this husband that made this aunt who has this glare of a raptor. Just how did he tame this 'crimson eagle', I wondered.

After that, every time aunt saw my uncles, she looked annoyed. Her anger did not subside easily.

A few days later, her husband came. My uncles welcomed him as much as possible.

How lame.

Chapter 59 – Reunion

The long awaited reunion with Sieglinde! I was so happy that I was so restless during the two days trip on the boat.

At the port, a servant from Sieg's house was there to guide me.

In the carriage, a brother-in-law told me about the recent interesting happenings in the Wattins' mansion. I'm glad that Sieg's healthy.

Three hours later, we arrived at the lush lands that the Count ruled over.

In front of the entrance, Sieglinde's brothers were waiting for me.

I wonder what's happening. They all greeted me with bright expressions. It's not weird if it's just one, but there were many bulky soldier men lined up.

A strange scene.

"Welcome, Ritzhard-kun, we were waiting for you!"

"Eh? Aa, thank you very much."

"You do not have to be so polite here! We are brothers, are we not?"

"I see. I'll try to get used to it."

I was troubled at how I should react to these soldiers who spoke with such a neat manner. In addition, there were people I saw for the first time. Rather, out the five present, I'm seeing four of them for the first time.

They all had red hair, and faces of raptors. They were all a head taller than me, so it was a little scary to be surrounded by them.

“Brothers-in-law, why are you here though?”

“Eh, no, erm, that is.”

“Ah—, that is. That is because our strong..... I mean, c-cu, cute little sister..... nuo!! I am getting chills here!!”

“Aa, that is because you are saying something that you do not mean for real!”

“Anyhow, Sieglinde is slightly cross!!”

“Sieg is? Hehh, how unusual.”

Suddenly, my brothers-in-law all gasped and stared at me in disbelief.

“Erm, where’s Sieg?”

“To her room, please hurry!”

“U, wa!!”

I was pushed by the burliest brother to Sieg’s room. He opened the door, threw me in and closed the door.

I looked back at the door that was closed with great force, and tilted my head in wonder.

And when I looked around the room, Sieg was sitting by the window. When our eyes met, she stood up from surprise.

“Ritzhard!”

“Ah, long time no see, Sieglin.....”

Before I could say her name, Sieg ran over to me and hugged me.

The moment our bodies met, I wondered if this was a dream, but when her red hair brushed my cheeks I realised that it was real.

I savoured the hug.

“.....Sieg, I missed you.”

I whispered that into her ears, as Sieg silently nodded. When my lips touched her earlobes, they slowly dyed light red.

For now, I split away from Sieg and made her sit down on the chair beside the window.

“How is your body?”

“Aa, not bad.”

“I see.”

But she says that she still has morning sickness.

“Ritz, you look like you thinned a bit.”

“Is that so?”

I might have lost weight from stress. I didn’t have much time to rest because I had to teach father for a month. I was straining myself without realising it.

My thoughts on living together with my parents are utterly unspeakable. They were travelling for a decade, so their common senses became really weird. I got very tired from taking care of them.

“Really, living with Sieg was the best.”

Sitting down in front of Sieg, I reminisced about our life during the temporary period. I could only remember enjoyable things.

“Sieg, what were you doing for the past month?”

“Well, they said that I can’t do this or that, I had many limits.”

“Sounds tough.”

Mother-in-law and Sieg’s sister-in-law were next to her, keeping watch on her.

“They seem to think that I’ll go out exercising the moment they take their eyes off me. Really, what a rude family.”

Because her family was worried, she was quietly sewing or knitting.

Sieg showed me her works.

“You made a lot.”

“Well, I was bored.”

Woollen coat, gloves, scarf, socks. They all had neat trapezoid patterns.

Sieg put on the scarf on me.

The scarf felt good to touch, being made with blue yarn. The soft feeling healed me.

“This, is this for me?”

“Aa, everything here is for Ritz.”

“Eh, really!? I’m happy!”

Guess what, all the woollen goods are for me.

“Thank you, Sieglinde!”

I thanked her and kissed her on the cheek.

When I split from her, my eyes locked with her grey eyes. Since we were separated for such a long time, I ended up getting embarrassed.

We were staring each other for a long time, but Sieg averted her gaze first. Her eyelashes were fluttering slightly.

Leaning against the wall, Sieg looked embarrassed. When our gazes met again, she tried to escape, so I put up both arms against the wall to capture her.

“Hey, Sieg.”

“!?”

“Can I kiss you?”

“.....”

“You don’t want to?”

“.....Not really.”

Since she said didn’t dislike it, I took one arm off the wall and wrapped it around her waist.

“Ah, I should have taken my coat off.”

Because of the fluffy coat, I couldn't feel her. Because my brothers-in-law were waiting outside, I didn't have time to take my coat off.

However, if I back out now, it might be hard to capture the embarrassed Sieg again, so I continued.

She had hung her head down, so I put one hand to her chin and lifted her head up and kissed her. I wanted to savour this, but the brakes won't listen so I kissed her lightly.

I slowly split from her and looked into her face. Her cheeks were dyed red, and her grey eyes were moist, that it had a deeper glint than usual.

When I stroked her chin, her eyes were closed. Since I didn't have this opportunity that much, I kissed her lightly near the mouth and let her go again.

"Now, I have to go to father-in-law."

".....Aa, that's right."

This was Sieg's house. I couldn't stay here all the time.

"Where's father-in-law?"

"He seems to be in the office."

"I see. Thank you."

I gently patted her and started to leave, but Sieg grabbed my coat flap.

"Ah, right, my coat. I have to take it off."

"No, that's not what I mean."

"Nn?"

"As Ritz said, living together was the best."

“Well, with family, we can’t really have each other at the highest priority.”

For some reason, the time we lived together felt like a long time ago. We were split for just a month, it’s weird.

Sieg too made a bitter smile.

“I wish we can go back home soon.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll be able to go back soon.”

I didn’t make the vapid remark of pointing out that this was Sieg’s home as well.



Then the two of us went downstairs.

“Aa, Ritzhard-kun, nice work!”

“?”

I’m not sure what’s nice, but my brothers-in-law were welcoming so I bowed.

“So, about the ranch.”

“Eh!?”

“Is there anything wrong?”

“You, you are planning to work?”

“Yes, I am, so……?”

I seem to have said something strange, so I looked at Sieg.

“Father is just surprised that Ritzhard-kun is so diligent.”

“Eh, really?”

When I looked toward father-in-law, he nodded in agreement to Sieg’s words.

“You came a long way, you should rest for two or three days.”

“No, I can’t possibly.”

It feels bad to laze around. I pleaded for some work.

“Haa, really, I wish my sons would be a bit like this.”

It seems that my brothers-in-law, who are soldiers, aren’t helping with the ranch. But well, they’re here on vacation, so that doesn’t sound fair.

“Ritzhard-kun, to be frank, it’s a great help. Can you start helping me from the afternoon?”

“Yes, of course.”

Thus, I challenged myself to this new work.

Chapter 60 - The Unfortunate People of House Wattin

Father-in-law said that the ranch he started for fun after he retired was a small one, but for a country bumpkin like me it was plenty big.

In the fenced field, there are sheep, horses, cows, goats. There are pigs in the large hut and there are chickens in the small hut.

“First, let us start with cleaning.”

“Yes, sir.”

I was to clean the pigsty. The pigs go out strolling once a day, and cleaning is done in the meanwhile.

A large dog is guiding them. It's barking towards the easygoing pigs to move them.

Cleaning involves collecting the hay and replacing them with new ones. I am also to clean the feeders.

Father-in-law showed me an example, so I understood the feeling, so I asked him to leave it to me.

I thought I would be fine because I was used to taking care of reindeers and chickens, but the smell in the pigsty was beyond my imaginations. I didn't think I could endure it, so I tied a handkerchief around my mouth and nose before I continued working.

When I was almost finished, I heard a dog barking.

When I opened the gate, there were many pigs waiting with a dog at the lead.

“Can you wait a bit more?”

I asked them to wait then quickly finished up.

After that, there was more work and more work to do. There were about ten people working on the ranch. He was doing this as a hobby, so he decided to not get too many people.

“Iyaa, you really helped out a lot.”

“No, I’m still a bit slow.”

Father-in-law and I rested alongside each other. We were covered with dirt, but everyone was like that here so I didn’t care that much.

I washed only my hands and sipped warm milk.

“Delicious!”

Unlike reindeer milk, cow milk did not taste strong and went down the throat easily. The flavour was thick, and the scent was soft.

“It feels good to have something this tasty after working hard.”

“I’m glad you say that.”

All the dairy products they have at home are from this ranch. There’s also sausage, ham and smoked meat. Most of them are not sold, but used by family members and servants.

After the short break, it was time to feed the animals. While taking care to not stare into the pigs who were rushing over with great vigour, I put in feed in the feeders that I just cleaned.

Today’s work is finished! I didn’t do much work, but my stomach shamelessly growled.

“Now, let us go back. Are you hungry? Ah, before that, we should take a bath first.”

“Alright~”

On the wagon back, there were fresh milk, chunks of meat, and cheese wrapped in cloth. I sat down somewhere while father-in-law drove the horse.

The day was already almost over. The cold breeze brushed my cheeks, but it felt softer compared to the breeze back home.

Where I lived, the leaves all disappeared in winter, but here there was more green than white.

The fir trees surrounding the ranch are supposedly evergreens, trees which do not have their leaves fall.

“Since I see it all the time, it is not that interesting for me, but I see that it is interesting for someone from the snow country.”

“Well. The trees back home all shed their leaves before winter.”

“I see. By the way, there is a song.”

“About firs?”

“Right. Celebrating Christmas.”

Father-in-law seemed to remember it well. He sang the song while humming some parts. Though he said that it’s a song for Christmas, it was totally a song for the evergreen fir tree.

After we arrived, we delivered the goods to the servants in the kitchen and went straight to the bath.

“Ritzhard-kun, you can go first.”

“No no, father-in-law, you should go first!”

“No, I cannot go in before the person of honour today.”

“I didn’t do much today!”

“Everything is alright. Just go in first.”

“I’ll be fine with just some water in a barrel!”

“What are you talking about. You will catch a cold then.”

We kept telling each other to go in first, so in the end we went in together.

In the count’s mansion, there’s a special bath for people who came back covered in dirt from the ranch.

“Now now, shall I wipe your back?”

“Eh!?”

“I am doing this out of gratitude. There is nothing to worry about.”

“N-No! Father-in-law! It’s alright. I’ll just receive your feelings!! I can wash by myself!”

“Hey, you don’t have to hesitate.”

“Hii!”

The first bath I took with father-in-law was awkward in another sense.



I returned to my room without drying my hair properly. I undid my hair which was tied up carelessly and started drying it with a towel.

We are having dinner soon, so I am wearing clean clothes. I also have to make sure my hair is clean.

While I was drying my hair, there was a knock on the door.

“Ah, come in~”

When I answered half-heartedly, the door opened. Sieglinde came in.

“Huh, what is it?”

“No, I just wanted to see you.”

“I see.”

I moved the chair in the centre and offered her a seat.

“Sorry about this.”

“No, it’s alright.”

I didn’t want to show her me letting my hair down, so I always came out after fully drying my hair, but today because there was father-in-law I more or less ran away from the bathroom.

“It’s the first time seeing your hair untied.”

“.....Yeah.”

It’s like a sad wet dog so I didn’t want to show her though.

“Shall I dry it for you?”

“Eh, what!?”

The towel was taken from my hand.

Sieg moved behind me and dried my hair with smooth movements.

After she dried it, she tied my hair.

“Should I have tied it tighter?”

“No. It’s tied well.”

“I see. That’s a relief.”

Sieg said that she played with dolls with her niece in case this might happen.

“What should I say, I feel like I’m dying.”

“What do you mean?”

“I can’t do anything for this kind and cute Sieg.”

I can’t touch Sieg that much because she has morning sickness. So I could only gently caress her hand.

I had been off Sieg for a month, so just touching her energises me.

Until dinner was ready, the two of us spent the time quietly.



Unexpectedly, dinner was held at a small table for eight people. Sieg’s parents and two of her unmarried brothers, in total six people.

This was because father-in-law thought that dining with too many people would make it hard to talk together.

“Today was a really good day. Work went well thanks to Ritzhard-kun.”

“Sorry, we made you work the day you arrived.”

I felt much obliged from father-in-law and mother-in-law's kind words. I wasn't used to receiving praise, so I could only put on a shallow smile.

My brothers-in-law were being criticised by father-in-law, "Help at least a bit." To that, they humbly retorted, "We do not need to help with a ranch that is run as a hobby."

"Even so, it is a relief. Sieg was getting rough..... I mean, getting lonely."

"Brother, that is,"

"It is better now, a little bit."

My brothers-in-law talked about Sieg.

"Sieglinde sometimes become ferocious..... I mean, tomboyish."

"But that's her cute part!"

Suddenly, my brother-in-law's expression stiffened and he dropped the glass he had in his hand.

"A-Are you alright!?"

"A, aa. Sorry about that."

After reviving from his stiff state, he said that without meeting my gaze.

"Ah, so that is why."

"?"

The brother-in-law who is a year older than Sieg, sitting diagonally across from me, spoke up.

“Sieglinde can sometimes be overbearing..... I mean, she is sometimes strong-willed, how are you doing?”

“But her words are correct, so,”

“How much is he train...!! Gefu!!”

He suddenly looked down at his foot and looked to be in pain. I wonder what happened. Sieg, sitting across from him, also looked at him worriedly.

“Sieglinde, how nice that Ritzhard is a magnanimous man.”

“.....”

With father-in-law’s mysterious words, the conversation was over.

Chapter 61 - Lovely Sieglinde

After dinner I accompanied my father-in-law and my brothers-in-law in their drinking. They're Sieg's family indeed, they really can hold their drinks. Because I said before that I like ale, they prepared a fruit-flavoured beer for me.

The side dish is of course sausage (wurst)! The Thuringian sausage is handmade using pigs raised at the ranch and spices grown here.

We're using only charcoal to grill the sausage, because that's what's needed to proclaim the sausage as a Thüringer. In addition, father-in-law warned me that the sausage being sold with the name 'Thüringer Art' is not the real thing.

"Why don't we make sausage together tomorrow."

"Yes!"

I was interested in making sausage from some time ago, so I was excited about tomorrow.

"Father, how about letting him rest tomorrow?"

"Ah, is that better?"

"Brother-in-law, it's alright. I'm interested in making sausages, so I'm looking forward to it.

When I said that, everyone shot me a strange look.

"Er, erm, brother-in-law, did I say something weird?"

"No, no. We are just surprised that you wish to work so much."

"Haa, is that so~"

I had a similar conversation with father-in-law.

“It seems that Ritzhard-kun hardly rest throughout the year.”

Upon hearing father-in-law’s words, my brothers-in-law looked surprised again.

“This is normal in our village, so, erm, I’ve caused trouble to Sieglinde-san.”

“No, use my daughter. She has enough energy.”

“Right. She does have energy left over.....”

“Oi, stop, do you want to face a miserable situation again!?”

“Ah, ah. Right.”

“?”

When Sieglinde became the topic, my father-in-law and my brothers-in-law made a sad expression. They must be lonely that their lovely little sister married off somewhere far away. I didn’t realise it. Maybe it would be good to visit for some time at least once a year.

“Ritzhard-kun, what part of my daughter did you come to like?”

It seems that I should tell. However, to tell something that I didn’t even tell her to her family.

“It is alright if you do not wish to tell us.”

“I will tell you.”

Everyone looked sad, so I had to say it.

I reminisced about many things: learning true love, receiving love, feeling relieved..... though that was only a few months ago before I returned to my country.

“I fell in love with her at first sight at the ball.”

“!?”

Grey eyes opened wide. I wonder if they're thinking I'm a light man.

“Well, it's not just her appearance, I was captivated by her spirited eyes.”

“Ah, that! Hm, I see. Then I can understand. Indeed, my daughter's eyes are special.”

Indeed, she did have the eyes befitting the title ‘the Crimson Eagle’.

While living with her, I learned many things about her.

About her diligence, her kindness, her undaunted stance towards the hardships of life. Everything about Sieg was lovely.

“And then~”

“It's okay now, thank you. I understand your love for my daughter!”

My father-in-law and my brothers-in-law were blushing. I might have talked too much about Sieg's cuteness.

“Should we sleep now?”

“Alright.”

Because the alcohol did not go down well, the party was over.

My face felt hot, so I washed my face and brushed my teeth before I went to my bedroom.

The room next to the one I was assigned was Sieg's room. There was no light flowing out from under the doors, so she must be sleeping. I thought of seeing her face before I went to sleep, but I didn't want to wake her so I went straight to my room.

Under the light of the fireplace, I slowly walked to the bed.

“Nn?”

There was a lump on my bed.

“You’re late.”

“!”

I almost screamed.

It was Sieg.

“Huh? Did I enter the wrong room?”

“No, this is your room.”

“Oh yeah~”

In the dark, I took off my coat and changed into the thin silk pyjamas prepared on the chair.

“What is it? Is there something wrong?”

“Nothing, I just wanted to sleep with you.”

“!”

.....Oh no, my wife is too cute.

I wanted to be by her side quickly so I quickly changed and climbed into the bed.

Under the covers, there was Sieg. This might be paradise.

Just in case, I checked her body.

Yup. She's wearing clothes.

"How unusual~"

"They said that a pregnant woman should keep her body warm."

"How unfortunate."

I put all my effort into not having wicked thoughts.

"Good night."

"Are you going to sleep now?"

".....Yeah."

It would be nice if my love for Sieg was always pure.

Sadly, I am a man, so normally it would be fine but once my desires start boiling I don't think either my mind nor my body would be satisfied from light touches.

"Sieg."

"What is it?"

"I love you."

"I know."

Even as she said that coldly, she hugged me tighter.

Uwa, my wife is too cute (the rest is omitted).

Because I was wearing thin pyjamas, I felt her heat directly. Moreover, I discovered that she did not have any underwear on.

.....Let's think of something else.

What should I do. Since I just told her that I love her, maybe I should tell her about what I talked about with her father and brothers?

"What's wrong?"

"No, erm, well,"

Too much stimulation. I can't sleep like this.

"Come to think of it, you took a bath with father."

"!"

My head was drenched in pink, but from thinking about the embarrassing (?) bath scene with father-in-law, I remembered the dark past from a few hours ago.

What a relief. I think I can become unconscious now.

In the end, I fell asleep as I talked about how I came to take a bath with grandfather.



The next day, I went out to the ranch in the morning.

I milked the cows and got eggs. Fresh eggs came in the morning.

I took off my working clothes and changed into clean clothes before I went to the dining room. It's hard being a noble. If it was my home, I would probably be just in my working clothes all day.

There were only pretty people from House Wattin for breakfast.

Mother-in-law, the wife of a brother-in-law and her two daughters (6 and 9 years old) and Sieglinde.

The little princess next to me was staring at me intently.

"What might it be, princess?"

"Princess!? Mother, he said princess!"

"Don't raise your voice."

Ah, I failed. It's hard to talk to women.

"Hey, that headband, did you get that from aunt Sieglinde?"

"Yes."

"I thought so!"

So Sieglinde played dress-up with her little niece.

"Aunt, you are very good!"

"Thank you, Adeltraud."

Is the story over now? I thought, but she was still staring at me.

“Hey.”

“What is it?”

“Did you come from the snow country?”

“Yes I did.”

“I never saw a white-haired person before.”

“There are many of us back home.”

“Hehh!!”

It seems that a six-year-old girl’s curiosity is endless.

After breakfast, the little princess of House Wattin, Adeltraud came over and told me to lend my ear.

When I crouched down, she started whispering.

“You’re actually a fairy, right?”

“!”

I ended up making a surprised expression at Adeltraud.

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell anyone else.”

“Ah, thank you.”

I ended up saying yes. What should I do? I’m almost a middle-aged man, but a young girl told me that I am a fairy.

When I discussed that with Sieg, she laughed. I'm being serious here though.

"Isn't it fine, a fairy."

"I'm almost thirty, and I don't have special powers, though?"

"A special power?"

Sieg smiled, then came over and whispered something.

"The Snow Fairy of Happiness."

"!"

From the surprise attack, my face heated up.

I crouched down on the spot and waged a desperate battle against embarrassment.

Chapter 62 – Thüringer

Today, I will be making sausages.

The workroom did not have any heating, that my breath was white.

Since we were making food, I tied up my hair and put it under a hat, tied a cloth around my mouth. I also wore different working clothes, a white one with an apron.

I thought father-in-law's eyes were kind, but before we started making sausage, his two grey eyes beamed. They were like those of a noble raptor soaring through the sky.

Sieg and father-in-law were daughter and father indeed.

After we finished changing, he told me the secret to making sausages.

“Anyhow, make sure that the temperature of the meat does not get high. You must keep the meat's temperature low for a delicious sausage!”

“I see!”

When it was about sausages, father-in-law became passionate. As the student, that energy was infectious.

“This is important for making sausage.”

From a cold storage, a white object was brought out. When I wondered what it was, he answered that it was salted sheep intestines.

“The salt will be washed away for about an hour.”

It seems that father-in-law put the intestines in water before breakfast. Then, that will be washed properly and wrapped around a stick.

“And this is the most important thing.”

“Oh, ohh!”

With a bang! two large pieces of meat were placed on the table. They’re pork, the lean meat and the back meat, kneaded with salt and saltpetre then frozen.

“What’s most important is to not let the meat get warm!”

Sausage is made under low temperature, so that the spice and the fat would mix well. If the temperature goes, apparently the fat comes off and the texture becomes worse.

“Then you grind the meat! It is alright in winter, but in summer you have to wash your hands in ice water before you do it!”

“Hehh!”

Even in winter, if the work drags on, the hands get warm so they still use water to keep their hands cool. The tools are also chilled. Even the meat is half-frozen.

“Unless we do not take this much care, we will not be able to get the delicious texture. I am saying this many times, but be careful about the temperature.”

“Yes, sir!!”

I diced the meat and then ground them finely in the meat grinder.

“Once it is ground, add the powdered spices.”

Fitting of the name 'Thüringer', it uses herbs harvested from the forest or grown in the area.

Garlic, majoram, caraway, coriander. There were many spices I saw for the first time.

After the meat is seasoned, it is put into a metal container that had many blades that looked like feathers. The lid is shut tight, then the contents are stirred by rotating the handle.

Even in this container, there was ice. It seems that they are needed to keep the meat cool.

Even as I kneaded the meat, ice was added. Even though I wasn't touching it, the fast rotating blades heated up the meat.

While taking shifts, we managed to grind the meat into soft and lustrous meat.

"Hm. Great emulsion!"

"S-So, this is, a great emulsion!?"

Emulsion, finely ground meat.

The finished meat is then put into the sheep intestines.

One end is tied, then the processed meat is stuffed into the intestines.

"Ritzhard-kun, do not let your focus slip!"

"Yes, sir!"

Even though a nice emulsion was made, the sausage was not complete. Here, if too much time is taken to stuff the meat, the temperature rises and the quality becomes bad.

I quickly stuffed the meat into adequate lengths.

At the end, I wiped the water off and dried them with a drier. If the water is not removed properly here, the skin apparently becomes crumbly.

After that, it is processed a bit, boiled then cooled. Then it's done.

Father-in-law took out some Thüringers that were just made. He lit the stove outside, laid on a metal wire grill and put on some sausages.

“Sir, these are the goods you requested.”

Coming on horseback, the servant had a basket covered with a white cloth. The contents were unknown.

Father-in-law wordlessly received the basket as he continued to grill the Thüringer sausages with a sharp gaze.

The tools for grilling sausages were interesting as well. The handles were like those of scissors, but the ends were flat to make it easier to grab sausages.

With a clicking sound, the surface was cut open. From that part, oil flowed out.

As a nice smell flowed out, father-in-law flipped the sausages over with a serious expression. Nicely cooked, the sausages were like works of art.

With swift movements, father-in-law removed the covers from the basket. What was there were long breads that were slit open.

In one of them, he placed in a grilled Thüringer sausage. It was a bit strange, with the sausage being longer than the bread. As a finishing touch, he sprayed on mustard.

“Eat!”

“Yes!”

One bite. The sausage was long, so the first bite did not reach the bread.

It did not have the mustard either, so I could savour the taste of the Thüringer itself.

It made a nice, crisp crunchy sound as I bit into it. And from inside, the meaty, spiced juices flowed out. The meat was firm and bouncy, and the more I chewed the more I could taste everything.

I burned my tongue a bit from the juice, but I couldn't stop eating.

“Father-in-law, this is amazing!!”

“Of course, of course!!”

Father-in-law too was eating a grilled sausage.

At the third bite, I reached the bread and the mustard.

“——!?”

The Thüringer on its own was plenty delicious, but together with bread and mustard it was amazing beyond knowledge.

The hard bread and the juices from the sausage went well together. The spicy mustard was outstanding in combination with the Thüringer which did not have a spicy flavour.

It's delicious. It's just delicious!! I could only say this.

“How is this?”

“I want to be a child of this house!”

When I said that, father-in-law laughed heartily while showing his white teeth, returning to the usual kind old man.



“Adeltraud was bored because Ritz wasn’t here for lunch.”

“Oh.”

It seems that the princess wanted to have a secret conversation with the old fairy. I did a bad thing.

After that, I did not return to the house even at lunch, filling myself with sausage with bread. I worked a bit more then I returned. By then, it was already dark outside and my belly was already empty.

“Anyway, I didn’t expect that you would take a bath with father again.”

“Yeah. Well, I was surprised too.”

After returning home, we had a similar exchange to yesterday’s, and ultimately bathed together again.

Just like yesterday, Sieg came over to my room while I was drying my hair after fleeing from the bathroom.

Again, Sieg tidied my hair.

The way she stroked my hair felt good. At this rate, I'll end up falling asleep. To hold on to my consciousness, I talked about what happened at the ranch today.

When my hair was dried, she decorated it and even put on a headband.

"Thank you, Sieg."

".....Yeah."

Sitting next to me, her tone was grim. Maybe she overexerted herself. Out of panic, I looked at her.

"Sieg, what's wrong? Are you unwell?"

"No, it's not that."

"Are you tired from drying my hair?"

"It's different."

"Then why do you look so sad?"

When I looked at her, her mouth was tightly shut.

"Sieg, I won't know unless you tell me."

"....."

"Sieglinde, please tell me."

Because she didn't stop being stubborn even after I pleaded, I teased her plump and soft lips with my finger.

"!"

"There will be trouble if you don't tell me quickly."

“.....It’s different, it’s just my unruly behaviour.”

“Hehh, I see. However, I want to know that side of Sieg as well.”

While saying that, I gently caressed her thighs. They still feel very good.

“Ritzhard, wait.”

As she commanded, I stopped and fixed my posture.

After a moment of silence, Sieg started talking.

“I know I shouldn’t say this to diligent workers, but,”

“?”

“.....I felt displeased because you looked so friendly with father.”

“I-I see.”

“.....”

Sieg was feeling down because I was being so friendly with father-in-law.

However, I can’t suddenly stop meeting him. It’s a difficult problem.

Then, I had a good idea so I blurted it out without thinking it through.

“Right, okay! Let’s bath together from tomorrow on!”

“Alright.”

“!?”

“You can’t do that!” or so I thought she would say, but she coolly agreed.

When I was about to say that the words slipped, the servant came and informed us that dinner was ready.

What should I do? What will happen from tomorrow.

Even as I thought of such things, needless to say, my face became loose from happiness.

Chapter 63 - Sieglinde's Activity Report

When I heard that Ritzhard will be staying with me, I was really happy.

Last year, we spent all the time working together, so I thought that it wouldn't be too bad to relax together.

However, reality was not as satisfying as I had imagined.

Ritzhard, being the workaholic he is, went out to help father at the ranch. Time passed by quickly without the leisure to relax.

I wanted to help with at least some light work at the ranch, but mother disallowed it. She told me to stay still at home until I entered a stable phase, so my actions were restricted.

Even I do know my situation. I do understand that my arbitrary actions may have a bad influence on the baby inside me.

I said that it wouldn't be that bad to mother, but she only shook her head.

"The snow is piling up, and the cold northern winds are blowing as well. It would be bad if you caught a cold."

"....."

Compared to the cold of the remote lands, the wintry winds here felt like warm spring warm breezes. I said that, but it wasn't believed.

However, it was the advice of someone who gave birth to ten people, so I decided to listen to her.

I kept saying that I wanted to go out on the first and second days when Ritzhard came, but from the third day on I spent the time quietly at home.

Another unexpected development was that my family took a liking to Ritzhard.

Father along with my brothers and even my nieces took a liking to him.

Amongst them, father especially likes him. I got a headache from trying to figure out why.

Ritzhard also said this, you really can't weigh family members about who is the most important. I could really experience it.

I wanted to return to the remote village and live with just the two of us, but it will put a strain on my baby so I have to endure it.

However, I was putting up with frustration and loneliness when I was separated for the past month. So I was thinking, let's enjoy the second newlywed life.

However, reality was not that sweet, so yet again I ended up just waiting for Ritzhard's return home.

Though I'm only complaining, I do think that Ritzhard is amazing.

Most people don't really want to go to the family of their spouses, nor did they interact well with them.

I would receive divine punishment if I ever complained.

Evening. Coming back from work, Ritzhard joyfully talked about what he did with father today.

Though I was thankful that he was doing work for father in stead of my brothers who did not work, I felt a petty jealousy for father that I used to be the one who was working next to Ritz.

From the second day of living together, I reached the limit of patience. Now, I can't help but draw his attention.



Early morning. After waking up, I quietly went to my room as to not wake Ritz.

In the room specially made for storing clothes, there were many dresses. I called over a maid and discussed which dress would be good.

“How about this dark one here?”

“Ah, right. Let’s use that.”

The dress the maid picked out had the colours of the summer forest that Ritz liked.

The dress was designed so that it would not put stress on a pregnant woman’s belly. It’s open from around the neck to the breast, but from there the dress tightens, and below that the soft fabric unfolds into a long skirt so that it would not constrict around the body.

To make sure that my body would not get cold, a piece of fabric like a blanket was placed over my shoulders and my knees.

After that, it was time to put on makeup. Of course, the maid did it for me. She put on light makeup.

What decorated my chest was something that my father gave me a long time ago..... when I turned sixteen, when I made my debut in high society. A necklace with thick diamond decorations. It was very out of trend, but unfortunately this was the only accessory that I had.

My hair, which reached down a little longer than my shoulders, were tied into one behind my head with many pins, then decorated with a flowery ribbon.

“Sieglinde-sama, you look beautiful.”

“Thank you.”

The maids and servants behind me praised my looks as I checked myself with a mirror.

When I looked at the clock, it was already time to wake Ritzhard. While clutching my long dress skirt, I hurried to his room.



Ritzhard was curling up on the bed. He probably is tired from doing work he wasn't used to doing. He was sleeping soundly. I woke him with a loud voice even as I felt sorry.

“Ritz, wake up.”

“.....Yes.”

As usual, he's weak when he's waking up. I woke him up, but after responding he blinked a few times and returned to sleep.

Because it couldn't be helped, I put one knee on the bed, approaching him to shake him awake.

“Ritzhard!”

“!”

When our gazes met, he opened his eyes wide and got up.

“Uwa, what the!”

“What's wrong?”

“What, it’s just Sieg~ Iya, I thought a goddess came for me.”

“.....”

Dressing up from the morning had some effect. Though I only acted as an alarm before anything.

Ritz moved with vigour unexpected of someone who just woke, changing his clothes and washing his face. I thought he would want to braid his hair, but he went out with slight wet and unkempt hair like yesterday and came back in with his hair tied up neatly.

Ritz sat down next to me and showed me a kindly smile.

“Sieg, are you going out somewhere today?”

“No, not really. How about you, Ritz?”

“Making cheese.”

“Is that so.”

Even dressing up failed to draw the attention of the dense Ritz.

However, there was no reason to worry like yesterday so I answered composedly.

“Still, I’m glad.”

“About what?”

Ritzhard stroked the back of my hand, and tiptoed as he gently touched my lips.

“.....I don’t want to show such a beautiful Sieg to anyone else.”

“!”

I take everything back.

My effort from the morning were properly coming into fruition.



That day, I made sweets with my two nieces. The house's patissier guided us.

Today, we were making foreign sweets called chocolate truffles.

"Hey, what's chocolate truffle?"

"Chocolate truffle is a sweet that is made by coating small round chocolate ganache with oily chocolate, then finished by sprinkling cocoa powder."

"Hehh~ sounds nice!"

The ever curious Adeltraud kept asking questions to the patissier, who was from abroad. Her older sister, the nine-year-old Edelgard was listening quietly. Their personality was opposite of each other's.

"First, we cut chocolate into small pieces."

For handling the knife, Edelgard and I did it. Adeltraud watched from afar on a stool.

"Next, the chocolate pieces are to be slowly melted in water.

There were two bowls stacked up. One had hot water, while the other was for chocolate.

The older sister held the bowl while wearing gloves, as the younger sister stirred the chocolate with a spatula. Meanwhile, I warmed cream in a pot, making sure to turn the fire off before the cream started boiling.

Once the chocolate melted nicely, I mixed in the cream until it went soft.

“This is ganache?”

“Indeed.”

Soft chocolate made by mixing chocolate and cream is called ganache.

The finished ganache is cooled to make it easier to round.

Until the chocolate hardened, we took a short tea break.

“Do you two usually cook?”

“No, it’s the first time today! Right, oneechan?”

Edelgard shyly nodded.

It seems that they are planning to surprise their parents and grandparents with a present.

“Aunt Sieglinde, you also have to tell us how uncle Ritzhard reacted!”

“Alright.”

While we were chatting, a servant came and told us that the chocolate was ready.

The hardened chocolate is made into bite-sized round shapes. Then, those are put on a skewer, then submerged in liquid chocolate called couverture chocolate to coat the surface. After that, it's finished by sprinkling cocoa powder on top.

Neatly wrapped, it looked like a product from a shop.

I asked Ritzhard to give me some time when he came back for lunch.

“Sieg, what do you need?”

“Aa, I made this with Edelgard and Adeltraud.”

“Uwa, what is it?”

Ritzhard unwrapped the box.

“Ah, chocolate.”

“It's a foreign sweet called chocolate truffle.”

“Hehh!”

Ritz asked if it was okay for me to eat, then threw a chocolate into his mouth.

“Delicious.”

“I see.”

Since I thought his mouth would be filled with sweetness, I asked if he wanted some sparkling water with fruit juice.

“Rather, I need the goddess's kiss.”

“.....”

Even when I asked where this goddess was, he called my name in a carefree manner.

Since he suddenly said that, I quickly kissed his forehead.

“Huh, it’s for cleansing my palate, but you’re doing it on my forehead~?”

“.....”

So that’s what he wanted. I hung my head down.

Ritzhard closed his eyes and stayed still.

Since a light kiss isn’t that embarrassing, I drew my face in closer. However, the moment our lips locked, we were locked in an embrace and savouring it.

Though he looked aloof, when I approached he came all out to me so I was surprised.

Everything tasted like chocolate.

Yet again, the memory of chocolate overlapped with the memory of kissing.

Chapter 64 - Like a Noble

After dinner, I was called by mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law that there was something something they wanted to talk about.

A secret talk maybe, I thought as I headed to the room. When I opened the doors, I was greeted by two women with scary faces and my father-in-law who looked uncomfortable.

I sat down next to father-in-law.

“Ritzhard-san, I heard that you do not drink?”

“Ah, yes. Please don’t mind me.”

The drink on the table was left alone, and instead brother-in-law’s wife poured some juice for me. Meanwhile, mother-in-law kept opening and closing her fan.

“So, what might it be?”

Snap. As if they planned it out beforehand, they stopped moving simultaneously. I became scared, so I looked towards father-in-law to request help. However, father-in-law also looked terrified.

Sister-in-law² opened her mouth first.

“Since Sieglinde would start worrying if we kept you for too long, I’ll say this honestly. Ritzhard-san, you are overworking.”

“!?”

“Of course, working is not bad. However, before that, are you not a noble?”

“Are you saying, that mother-in-law and sister-in-law are angry because I did not act like a noble?”

2 She’s the brother-in-law’s wife, but for convenience’s sake I’ll make it sister-in-law.

“Yes!”

“W-Wait, it was I who requested Ritzhard-kun’s help with”

“Father-in-law, please remain silent!!”

“.....Yes.”

Though I was the one who said that I wanted to help out, I decided that it would be better not say anything unnecessary here so I watched on. I felt sorry, but the two amazons in front of me were too scary. Father-in-law, I won’t forget your sacrifice.

“There’s still more that I want to say!”

“!?”

The talk wasn’t over, nor was her anger gone. I pondered whether I should hide behind father-in-law’s back, which was trembling, but I decided to fix my posture and listen.

“You are neglecting Sieg too much!”

I don’t have anything to say against that. Really, I’m only meeting Sieg in the morning and in the evening, and for the rest I’m at the ranch.

When I thought about lazing around without doing any work, I felt bad so I ended up helping even when they didn’t ask me to.

“Sieglinde-san was always looking forward to meeting Ritzhard-san, but to never spend a day with her!”

I’m sorry. That was the only thing I could think.

“Any objections?”

“No, nothing.”

I was overwhelmed by sister-in-law's force. Rather, mother-in-law is scarier, saying nothing with a smiling face.

"Ritzhard-san!"

"Yes!"

"Starting from tomorrow, under mother-in-law's guidance, you will live like a noble!"

"....."

What do you mean by living like a noble!? Or so I thought but I thought that I would end up receiving another long lecture so I could only answer, "Yes, surely~."



After receiving that declaration, they coolly let me go. I thought of having a drink with father-in-law, but he was still left in the room. I wanted to rescue him, but there was sister-in-law and mother-in-law so I could only return to my room while praying for him with teary eyes.

In the bedroom, Sieg was already waiting on the bed.

"You're late."

"Nn, I was with father-in-law."

We were being scolded, I couldn't say that.

But then I remembered that she felt annoyed at me being so friendly with father-in-law, so I quickly changed the topic to the schedule tomorrow.

"Ah, tomorrow, I'll be with mother-in-law."

“What did you say!?”

“Of course, with Sieg as well.”

“With me?”

“Yeah.”

Her sharp eyes returned to normal.

She almost thought that I was getting friendly with mother-in-law as well. Dangerous.

“How did it turn out like that?”

“Well, I thought it might be good to learn what it is to live like a noble.”

“You don’t really have to change though?”

“Is that so~?”

I won’t tell her about them getting angry. So, I told her that I wanted to learn.

“I don’t think that there were any problems.”

“N~n.”

Come to think of it, even though I am a count, I didn’t live like a noble. Back home, I was no different from the villagers and had no dignity as a lord.

Maybe there is a fatal flaw in my behaviour. Maybe the villagers will see me in a different light if I fix that.

“Well, experiencing it isn’t a bad idea.”

“That’s true.”

While talking, I changed and climbed into the bed.

“That’s how it is, so please take care of me starting from tomorrow.”

“Alright.”

I gave her a goodnight kiss on the forehead and went to sleep.



In this country, the season for high society is autumn. From grand balls held by the king himself to small tea parties held by noble madams, there are many opportunities for socialising.

Today, there is a luncheon held here.

“Ritzhard-san and Sieglinde-san, you only need to come to the meal. Until then, you may rest.”

“Thank you, sister-in-law.”

With sister-in-law’s orders, Sieg and I waited in a room.

“We haven’t felt this in a long time, have we.”

“Indeed.”

It really has been sometime since we relaxed together like this.

As always, Sieg woke up early. Maybe because of the luncheon. her makeup was thicker than usual.

She was wearing rouge on her lips. They almost looked like ripe seasonal fruits.

However, I cannot taste them. If I do as my desire leads, her lipsticks will be ruined.

“Right, Sieg, let’s play games!!”

To disguise my immoral thoughts, I asked Sieg if she wanted to play.

“Then, why don’t we wager something?”

Sieg suggested. Of course, I answered.

“What should we wager?”

“How about the right to order one another forever?”

“Nn, well, alright.”

What should I say. I would be happy to listen to Sieg’s wishes, and I would be happy to make her do what I want, so it wasn’t much of a wager.

“What is it?”

“No, nothing!”

I had a sly smile again, so I was suspected.

The result: I lost. It was a clean defeat. It’s not as if I thought that it would be better to be ordered around by Sieg, it was an earnest match.

To the winner, Sieg, I kneeled on one knee like a knight swearing his loyalty to his liege.

“What is your order, my queen?”

Since her cute nieces are princesses, Sieg is the queen. Of course that's just inside my head.

"Then,"

"Yes."

"Here, from now on, live as you wish."

"Pardon?"

"I don't mind if you want to go out to the ranch all day, and I don't mind if you want to stay alone when you're tired."

"Why so suddenly?"

"You were told something by sister-in-law or mother, weren't you?"

"N-No, n-not really."

"Tell me the truth."

".....They did."

Surprising, Sieg saw through everything.

From the posture of swearing loyalty, I bent another knee and changed to the reflecting posture of a foreign country.

"So, Ritz, you have to listen to my orders."

"To live as I wish?"

"Indeed."

I never heard of such an order.

When I looked at Sieg in my confusion, she had a warm smile. My chest tightened.

How can I explain this feeling.

I almost wanted to cry.

Chapter 65 - As a Noble

For the luncheon at the mansion of House Wattin, it was being held at a different dining hall from usual, a much bigger one.

After reciting to myself that husband and wife should go in with their arms locked, then greet the participants at the door then take seats, I went in with Sieg.

In the dining hall, there were already many people there. I made a shallow smile, bowed down and went to our seats as per the butler's guidance.

"How fancy."

Looking at the well dressed up ladies, Sieglinde said in a quiet voice that only I can hear.

"But Sieg is the prettiest."

I whispered as I parted from her to sit across her.

It seemed that we were the last to arrive, since as soon as we sat down father-in-law gave a toast to thank everyone for coming.

As the servants busily started setting the table, I started talking with the people around me.

Everyone seemed to be interested in me, a foreigner, so they asked many questions.

"That's a rare hair colour."

"All the people back home have the same hair colour."

"I see. It's like the hair colour seen only in stories."

"Well, yeah."

“What was it. There was this story I read when I was little.”

I wonder if the snow fairy story is famous here. If this many people say that I’m alike, it’s worrying as to how similar I am to that.

The luncheon ended without much event. I had two flowers, young ladies, next to me, but I found out that I only yearned for one flower. Thinking of how I used to love all women equally, I did change a lot.

After the meal, we split into men and women and spent relaxing times.

The women had an elegant tea party. The men had vulgar talks with cigar and alcohol, to vent out their frustration.

Since there were many people around father-in-law, I sneaked away to a corner to not be spotted. I sipped a glass of sparkling fruit liqueur, almost lapping it.

“May I sit next to you?”

“Ah, yes.”

The man who approached this lonely corner was the husband of the lady who had been sitting next to me.

“Conrad von Baer Walbgen, at your service.”

“Ritzhard Salonen Revontulet.”

We introduced ourselves and raised our glasses.

Conrad was the same age as I was. Moreover, he was Sieg’s subordinate.

“Today, I got really tense.”

“Indeed.”

Sieg looked happy throughout the banquet because she was enjoying her reunion with a former colleague.

I also learned something unexpected. He was also an acquaintance of the only friend of mine in this country, Kayneth von Brzenska.

“I told him about Lieutenant Wattin, ah, she’s Lady Revontulet now. Anyhow——“

It seems that it was him who told my friend about the ‘Crimson Eagle’. What a coincidence.

“Truth be told, it wouldn’t be weird for her to have a higher command, but she refused promotions and stayed in our unit to continue commanding us.”

The stories of Sieglinde in her military career were brave and valiant.

“I apologise. I ended up talking to much.”

“No, no. It’s alright.”

Since I couldn’t possibly say that I wanted to hear about Sieg’s heroic exploits, I told him that I was thankful to hear such priceless stories.

“Right. This weekend, there will be holding a hunting competition. Kayneth is coming. Why don’t you come as well?”

Since I had my head full of Sieglinde, I haven’t been in contact with my old friend. I did meet him at the ball last month, but I only exchanged brief sentences with him, so I want to have an opportunity to slowly talk with him.

“Ah!”

“How about it? Is it the first time hunting?”

“N-No, I enjoy it.”

I didn't have any worries about hunting, but I couldn't arbitrarily decide here.

“May I ask my wife first?”

“Yes, of course.”

After saying that, I regretted it. It's bad to say that my actions were being controlled by my wife.

When I hastily made up an excuse, he smiled and said, “The lieutenant is a good commander after all.” Conrad, you are a good man.



After safely finishing the luncheon and having a reflection meeting with father-in-law, we had dinner.

When I went to my bedroom after taking a bath, the goddess was lying in the bed as always. Since I was thankful, I clasped my hands in my head.

I changed into my pyjamas and dived into the bed. I talked about Conrad.

“So, I was invited to a hunt.”

“Of course you can go.”

“Thank you. What about you?”

My wife is having a tea party at Conrad's mansion. Sieg too was urged, so I tried asking.

“Can I also?”

“Alright. I’ll write that in the letter.”

“Please.”

Since I didn’t have anything more, I closed my eyelids to go to sleep. But then Sieglinde poked my shoulder with her fingers.

“Sieg, what is it?”

“Just a bit before we sleep.”

“Okay.”

Sieg talked about many things that happened today.

While listening to her story, I thought that it’s tough being a lady.

“Today, there were only young and pretty ladies, but I was glad that Ritz said that I was the prettiest.”

“Of course Sieg is the most dazzling person in the world.”

“Is that so.”

Saying that, I brushed back her hair and rubbed the ornament on her earlobes with the tips of my fingers as if to check it. Maybe because that act was ticklish, she had her eyes open thinly.

“I just wanted to talk. Sorry, this is somehow embarrassing, it got long. Let’s sleep now.”

The hand that was caressing her earlobes were grabbed and returned to its original position.

Even though I felt disappointed, I shut my eyes tight from the thought that Sieg too must be tired.

“Good night, Sieglinde.”

“Aa, sleep well.”

The quiet night passed by peacefully.



At the weekend hunt, we were looking for a small animal called roe deer.

Surprisingly, it seemed that hunting was done for entertainment among nobles. Even the target is predetermined: Royalties hunt deers, nobles hunt roe deers, and the rest hunt rabbits.

“The dogs will find the prey in the forest, so please wait.”

“Alright.”

I learned the rules then mounted the horse, proceeding into the forest with my old friend, Kayneth.

“Kayneth, we’re finally alone together.”

“You idiot! Don’t say something so disgusting!”

“Sorry. I just felt happy.”

Kayneth von Brzenska.

He has many circumstances, and became a noble when he was eighteen. He doesn’t speak like a noble, but thanks to that attitude I quickly got close to him.

“Really, I didn’t think you’d marry the ‘Crimson Eagle’.”

“Right. I never thought that she would agree.”

When I told him about the one year long temporary couple life, Kayneth said that it's nice that I had a miracle.

"Really, Sieg is the goddess of miracles."

"So, I was right about getting a strong wife, eh?"

"Well, indeed."

Kayneth advised me to find a strong woman who could survive the harsh life in the remote lands. However, because I only went after women who were pretty, I kept getting rejected. He had not wrong about getting a strong wife.

Since we were chatting so much, the animals didn't come near us, and the dogs looked disappointed because they could not find any prey.

"Since it's hunting, I thought you'd go all out."

"Well, it's a bit different from back home."

Indeed, hunting animals for entertainment didn't feel good so I couldn't put my heart into it.

For me, hunting is done for survival, not for entertainment. Old habits die hard.

When I returned to the meeting point, people were evaluating who got the biggest one.

Seeing that, I really did feel the difference in culture.

Chapter 66 – Family

While learning how to act like a noble, or helping father-in-law's ranch, or relaxing with Sieg, the first winter at the foreign country passed quickly.

It's already about five months since I came here. Sieg's belly was heavy with a child as well. According to the doctor, she's about seven months pregnant. At the beginning of summer, a new life will be born.

Sieg wanted to return to my country since she was now in her stable phase, but because people around us fiercely objected we decided to stay here until childbirth.

I am happy that she loves the remote lands. However, there are no doctors in the village. In contrast, here there is mother-in-law who is experienced in giving birth along with servants, so it was reassuring. Thus, I decided to stay until summer.



Today, I strolled the lush spring forest with the two little princesses and Sieg.

Edelgard and Adeltraud walked with baskets to put flowers into.

Without delay, the energetic princess looked over here and asked me a question.

“Dearest Uncle Ritzhard, what's that violet flower?”

“That's blue mallow. It's used for tea.”

“Really!?”

“The tea is blue like the flower, but with lemon it turns a pretty light pink.”

“Hehh, amazing, I want to see it.”

“Then, why don’t we try it back home. Though it will be a few days later because we have to dry it.”

Blue mallow is good for sore throats. It also protects mucous membranes, so it’s good for stomachaches as well.

As I told them, the sisters picked only the flowers into the baskets.

“It is a little hard to drink though.”

Blue mallow doesn’t have a particular taste or smell, so it isn’t really tasty. When I was little, I remember drinking it with honey when I became sick.

The flower tea doesn’t taste good. I refrained from saying such a dreamless thing to the two who were joyfully picking flowers. Well, they might still be able to enjoy it from seeing the colour change, or so I thought and gave up about talking about the taste.

With slow steps, Sieg followed by. The servant holding up a parasol behind her was sweating profusely, so I held out a handkerchief.

“Sieg, are you alright?”

“Aa, I’m fine.”

I took off my coat and laid it out on the floor to offer her a seat.

“Sorry about that.”

“No need.”

The two of us sat down on the grass and narrowed our eyes from the sunlight.

In the forest, many birds were chirping about as if they were whispering. From above the trees, the squirrels occasionally peeked out. The breeze brushing the leaves carried fresh air here.

As I enjoyed the genial forest, I heard an energetic voice approach.

“Dearest Uncle, is this enough?”

“You’ve collected a lot.”

Their baskets were filled with violet flowers.

“Shall we go back soon?”

“Alright.”

In this country, the tree branches intertwine greatly, that the lush colours turn dark deeper in the forests. There are not many places where one can stroll in the light.

Moreover, it was not good to make Sieg walk for too long so I decided to return home.

After drying the blue mallow that was collected from the forest for few days, a beautifully coloured tea is made by extracting the substances of the flower with warm water.

“Pretty~~!!”

Seeing the freshly brewed tea, Edelgard and Adeltraud gleamed their eyes.

Then, when I dropped in some lemon juice with a teaspoon, the blue liquid turned pink.

“Waa!!”

“Amazing!!”

Even Edelgard was exclaiming in surprise.

“Blue mallow is also called the herb of dawn.....”

“Dearest Uncle Ritzhard, this is magic, right!?”

“Pardon?”

Even though we lived together for many months, it seems that my image as a fairy had not changed. I ended up smiling wryly. Because I did not want to disappoint the two princesses, I boasted my trivial knowledge about herbs. Then, Adeltraud said, “That’s the fairy for you!! You know everything about the forest!”

This old fairy is moved to tears.



The season quickly changed, and it was now summer.

When the sun peeked out from below the horizon, a new life was born.

The red-faced newborn was declaring its birth.

When I gave words of encouragement to Sieg, who became completely haggard, she vigorously responded, this is nothing.

The baby was washed by the women and wrapped in a soft cloth before handing it over to mother-in-law.

The hair colour was white. The eyelids were chubby as though they were bloated, that it seems like it will take some time for the eyes to open.

Even from marriage with foreigners, the babies born from the village have white hair. It's a mystery of the village.

"We don't yet know who's more alike."

"But it's so cute."

Mother-in-law said as she looked at the baby's face.

"Hey, Ritzhard-san, are you alright?"

"Yes."

I was still a bit agitated, and the fact that a baby was born didn't feel real. I was hugging it in my arms, yet it felt like a dream.

I took the baby to Sieg who had now recovered.

"Sieg, look, it's our baby."

"Aa, what a relief."

After seeing the baby, Sieg looked very relieved.

"Sieg, thank you. I am glad that you are both healthy."

No words of thanks were enough.

"Protect the family, dad."

"!"

I came to my senses from mother-in-law's words of encouragement.

Then I really felt it. That I finally had a new family that I had been yearning for.



The baby is a boy, and the name is Arno.

Grandfather named him. "Become strong like an eagle," it meant.

Grandfather was fawning over his great-grandson.

"It's a son fitting of the name of a raptor. Look at his sharp gaze."

Arno had white hair and blue eyes like me, but his face was more like Sieg's. He had all the traits of a creature living in the village of fairies in the remote lands, but he was more like a brave eagle chick than a baby fairy. Grandfather must have been thinking the same thing, since when we looked at each other we ended up laughing.

"If it's this child, he will live well in those remote lands as well."

"I hope he does."

"Of course he will."

"Thank you, grandfather."

Arno, whom grandfather was holding, suddenly started crying. Since he was just drinking milk, it might be the diaper.

"By the way, can you change the diapers in the ship?"

“We can.”

The servant brought a new diaper over, so I continued chatting while swiftly changing it.

Tomorrow, I am finally returning to my hometown after nine months.

Father-in-law wished for me to stay here, but I was worried about the state of the village, and Sieg too wish for the life of the village so I respectfully declined even as I felt sorry.

In addition, I was worried about how father was doing as the lord. I received letters a few times a month. “Everything’s alright~,” that sort of loose reports were being sent, but worryingly no letters came from the villagers. I felt anxious because something bad might have happened to the village.

“About that, are you really fine with it.”

“Well, for now.”

Almost as if we were swapping places, it was decided that father and mother will come to this country to live. There was a request to father to present his research or something. If it’s only the two of them, I would be worried, but there’s grandfather so it will be alright.

The next day.

It was the day to return home. Before we left, we bid goodbye to grandfather.

“Ritzhard, a parting gift.”

“?”

Grandfather pointed to a square black bag on a small table. The marquess’s butler held up a document to sign.

“Eh, what’s this?”

“Chocolate.”

“Pardon?”

“It’s special chocolate, so there is a special procedure for this. Stop yapping about and just sign it!”

“Y-Yes.”

It didn’t exactly know what it was, but I wrote my name where the butler was pointing towards. To the carriage, a servant carried the bag.

“Why chocolate?”

“It’s the parvenu style that’s trending recently.”

“Ah~ that.”

I recalled that I heard about it a few days ago from brother-in-law. It seemed that recently nobles are stacking chocolate shaped like gold bars on tables like parvenus to enjoy their drinks.

“I already had these. I don’t need them, so take them without complaining.”

“U-Understood.”

The butler opened the bag slightly and showed the chocolate inside. The dazzling wrappings looked like the real thing.

“Huh? These look real”

I flinched from grandfather clearing his throat, and was reminded that it was time to go.

“Grandfather, thank you for so many things. I will be back again.”

“Alright, so go already.”

I bowed my head down to and ran over to my family who were already waiting in the carriage.

While watching the scenery move as the carriage started moving, I bid farewell to Sieg's homeland.



During the two-day-long boat trip, when I grabbed the bag grandfather gave me to have some chocolate, it was suspiciously heavy. It was almost as heavy a kid in their early teens. Since the servant from the Marquisate carried it to the cabin, it was the first time I was touching it too.

“Eh, what the, this, it's sort of, heavy.”

To me who was not moving from in front of the bag, Sieg came while hugging our son.

“What's in this bag?”

“Chocolate, from, Grandfather?”

The weight wasn't that of confectionery for sure.

When I carefully opened the bag, there definitely were gold bars inside.

“Th-This is!?”

“It indeed is real gold.”

“.....”

Believe it or not, grandfather's parting gift wasn't chocolate, but thirty gold bars. Other than the gold bars, there were many documents and a letter from grandfather, which could be summarised as, "Non-returnable."

"I was tricked....."

"No, didn't you realise it when you were told to sign a document?"

"No, but, he was rushing me!"

"....."

A son and gold bars, I returned home with great gains.

Chapter 67 - Final Chapter: With Gratitude

Visiting after a long time, the remote land was now completely summer. By now, the village women must be putting their effort into picking berries.

It was a long two day's trip, but it ended without much trouble.

"Sieg, you must be tired."

"No, I'm alright."

"That's good to hear."

My wife was dependable as always. My newborn son also did not cry except for milk and diapers.

My son, Arno, was staying still in my arms. His hard and gleaming gaze was sharp for a baby. That's indeed the child of the Crimson Eagle. His eyes, which opened about a week after his birth, are blue like mine. With those blue eyes, he gazed at us.

"Arno, at the village, grandpa and grandma are waiting for you~"

It's also pleasant to imagine just how my parents would react at seeing their grandson.

The carriage stopped in front of the fortress, and the coachman opened the door.

"The luggage will be moved to the mansion."

"Thank you."

Since the bag full of gold was hard to move, I requested for the servant to accompany us on the carriage. It was someone who was from the marquise, so we trusted the servant.

While carrying Arno in my arms, we went into the fortress.

“Ah, my lord!?”

There was a relatively young soldier at the reception desk. With his shout as a signal, people flooded out from the room behind him.

“Oh, your lordship has returned!”

“Please say that you won’t leave us now!?”

“We’ve been waiting for youuu ~ ~”

Because of their mysterious greeting, Sieg and I stared at each other and tilted our head.

“Aa, it’s been a while.”

A little later than the rowdy soldiers, Captain Artonen came.

“Wow, how cute.”

Captain Artonen stared at Arno, and had a smile as if he was melting. Then, he glanced at Sieg and asked, “Girl?” with a serious expression.

“A boy. The name’s Arno.”

“Ah, I see. Ah, no, he just looked so like the Countess.”

As if to console Captain Artonen, Arno had a nihilistic smile. Rather, what's with this smile that's not like a baby. When I asked Sieg, she said that she didn't know how to teach people to smile, while having a smile similar to her son's.

"By the way, how's the village?"

"Eh!? Ah, erm, right. Peaceful."

What is this. What is this report that feels incomplete.

"Erm, could it be that, father did something?"

"His lordship has been doing his work perfectly."

"Really?"

".....R-Really."

The captain responded without looking at me.

"Ritz, let's get going soon. We're disturbing their work."

"Ah, right."

Hearing that, Captain Artonen offered, "Why don't you have some tea?" with a dismayed look. However, I politely declined, saying that my parents were waiting. We exited the fortress and proceeded into town.

As I had my attention drawn to the village surrounded in greenery, I came across a villager.

"Ah!"

"?"

The young man who met my eyes shouted, “The lord is back——!”

“What!?”

We were surrounded by the villagers in an instant, and were warmly received.

There were even elderly people. They joyfully looked at Arno.

“My lord, you will keep being the lord here, yes!?”

“The lord is back, thank goodness~”

“Please be a lord again quickly!”

Maybe it’s because I have a baby. It seems a bit too much.

“Erm, did father do something?”

When I asked that, everyone’s faces grew grim. When Sieg said, “Father-in-law and mother-in-law are waiting for us,” people quickly dispersed.

Just what happened. I was curious, so I went to shop lady to learn what happened.



“Waa~ Haru-kun, Sieglinde-san, welcome ba~ck.”

The person in question was relaxedly sketching plants in the front yard. Hearing that, mother also came out.

“My, welcome back, Ritchan, Linde-chan~!”

Of course, ‘Linde-chan’ refers to Sieg.

Father said, “so cute~” while looking at Arno, while mother was teary-eyed.

“Father, will you explain what happened?”

“Pardon?”

I questioned my father, who stopped sketching plants and was about to start sketching Arno. For now, mother suggested that we come inside, so we moved to the living room.

“So?”

Sieg, Father and I, the three of us talked together. I left Arno to mother.

“It’s not ‘so’. Why did you act as you wished?”

Father tilted his head. It seemed that he did not know why he was getting scolded.

What I learned from the shop lady was my father’s tyranny.

He didn’t disrupt religion like grandfather, but he ordered the villagers to report every detail on the number of prey they hunted, acted harshly to the elderly people who disliked foreigners, and forced people to participate in the spring farm work.

“But I did nothing wrong.”

“.....”

Of course, the number of the animals in the forest needs to be tracked. If the balance collapses, some animals might even become extinct. However, the villagers know which animals are diminishing and which animals are increasing in number. Thus, we controlled what was hunted by ourselves.

Let the elderly people be free, that was something I decided on when I became a lord. Of course, fixing their xenophobia might be good for other people from foreign countries and Sieg. However, getting that scared is too much.

The farm work that is being done as an alternative to taxation is not forced. That was because not every family had a working man.

There were many people resistant to change, so I did my duties as a lord with the mindset that small changes will be better. However, like grandfather, father did not care for how the circumstances or the feelings of the villagers.

“Well, you are too soft, and there were problems because of that, so isn’t it all good?”

“Really?”

“Right. Plus, won’t it be easier to work after an evil lord ruled?”

“!”

Indeed, the elderly people were overjoyed at my return. It probably wasn’t just thanks to Arno.

“Father, could you have aimed for that?”

“No~ It just ultimately turned out like that~”

“.....”

I heard from grandfather that father is shrewd man, but he was the usual fluffy. He might actually be cold-hearted, I had thought, but I soon regretted thinking that.



From there on, the five of us lived together peacefully.

I went out hunting, while Sieg worked indoors. Father devoted himself to research, and mother joyfully took care of Arno.

A month later, a letter from grandfather arrived, demanding father to come.

Even that aloof father seemed to like Arno, that he started mumbling that he didn't want to leave.

However, the next month, an intimidating servant from the marquisate came and took him away.

I thought mother would of course accompany him, but she waved her hand to father, saying "I have to take care of Ar-chan~"

Father looked crestfallen as he left.

So, it became four, but the relaxing warm life did not change.

After having lunch with Sieg, I took Arno from mother to let her have some food as well.

Drinking milk properly every day, sleeping well every day, crying and living energetically, Arno was now a handsome baby. His cheeks were puffy that they looked as though they would be tasty.

When I hold out my finger, he holds tightly onto them. Even that feeble grip was lovely.

Sieg, sitting next to me, was also staring at Arno.

"Hey."

"What is it?"

"How do I convey feelings of gratitude."

No matter how many times I said thanks, it never felt like it was enough. I couldn't express this joy in words.

"Ritz, there's this thing you do all the time, no?"

"Pardon?"

Showing gratitude, what did I do last time.

"What was it?"

".....When we hunted wild reindeer together for the first time, when I gave you the bracelet I made, and when I accepted the marriage..... you still don't know?"

"Ah!"

I remembered that I kissed her on the cheek when I was overjoyed and excited.

I put my lips to Sieg's cheek, and also kissed Arno's forehead with feelings of gratitude.

A warm feeling filled my heart.

Arno made a nihilistic smile again, so Sieg and I ended up laughing.



In the following years, four more children were born after Arno.

The eldest son Arno took after Sieg, in both his appearance and his personality, growing into an honest and earnest boy.

The eldest daughter Veronica took after both her parents, growing into a relaxed girl.

The second son Ulrich was docile and liked reading.

The second daughter Krimhilde was wild and energetic.

The third son, Erenfried was spoiled and loved Sieg and mother.

Arno's looks took after Sieg, but the other four looked just like me.

Before I realise it, I had the most children in the village.

The village was slowly changing, but it was still peaceful.

There were more permanent residents from foreign countries.

My parents were the same, the children were healthy, and Sieglinde was still a hard worker.

I really am a blessed one, I felt every day.

And this joyous life continued every day.

The Snow Country Life of the Northern Nobleman and the Raptor Wife — Extra — fin.

Chapter 68 - Bonus Chapter: Lukas Salonen Revontulet's Activity Report

When I returned to my homeland, what awaited me was father's reception.

"Kukuku, ha~hahaha!!"

"....."

Father laughed loudly as he pointed towards me.

"Hey, how about calming down now?"

"Hah, hah, as if I can not laugh at this! Fu, fuhaha!"

"....."

As to why he is so happy, it is because he was amused at seeing depressed from coming here without my wife.

"Hmph. Serves you right. You're receiving punishment for pestering your son."

"Well, I wonder about that?"

"Being so carefree like that again, you really have no shred of cuteness!"

Father especially doted on Ritzhard from a long time ago, according to the servant. He does have other grandsons, but maybe they aren't cute like me.

"As a researcher, I thought that I shouldn't disturb the village's customs and cultures too much."

"So you thought that you shouldn't help you son?"

"Right."

"Then you're just a shitty parent!"

“I won’t deny it.”

“I hope your true nature is revealed to your family, you black-hearted man!”

“But everyone will coolly accept me.”

“Go to hell!”

Father clicked his tongue and left the room. I felt glad that he is healthy.

Then I was also surprised at myself for thinking that.

People do change.



I started adventuring the world a few decades ago.

When the research that I have been doing for many years was finally recognised by the world, my colleague said that I must be happy but I said that it wasn’t so, which surprised surprised him. That might have been the motive.

Lacking emotions. Father always said that to me.

I thought that it was fine if I was okay with it. But I was told that I am a black-hearted man.

Then I remembered a line that was bothering me, from someone’s research paper. “I felt the joy of life and how important it is for people to have one another.”

Joy of life, the importance of meeting people, I never felt that. But I didn’t have any hardships because of that.

However, I was curious at this feeling inside me that I did not have.

If I travel around the world, I might be able to experience this mysterious thing. People around me tried to stop me, but I went out travelling after all.

Travelling the world costs a lot of money. If I want to travel safely, it would cost just as much.

My savings were quickly depleted, and I even had to use the allowance I was given by father.

I read the travel guides written by a certain man again. When I went to the countries and the villages written on them, I received a warm welcome just because I was one of his kind. From their words, I could also learn of his kind personality.

Of course, not all was good.

I was tricked by an interpreter once lost all my money. I was assaulted by bandits when I was moving on a wagon. I even spent a night in prison.

Even so, I couldn't stop travelling.

More than the fear of losing something, the want to learn about the world was greater.

Also, I was bothered.

In one village, an elderly lady whom I owe a favour said, "There is a treasure that cannot be replaced for you somewhere on earth. If you find that, you will definitely become happy."

She didn't explain what the treasure is. Something that is irreplaceable for me, I couldn't imagine it.

Something irreplaceably precious. I could only tilt my head.

A healthy body and money for living is important, I can say for sure that they are not treasures.

Without a clear answer, I continued my travel.

The travel guides moved on to talk about the arctics. Amongst them, there was an interesting people.

‘Inuit’. I was greatly intrigued by this people eating raw meat.

Inuits live north of the arctic line.

They live in the arctic circle. Even among that, the place where the Inuits live are detailed as ‘the worst possible environment for human survival’.

The guide also had what I should look out for.

First, I was to be careful of ‘scurvy’.

Simply told, scurvy is caused by the lack of water-soluble vitamins found in fruits and vegetables and is a lethal illness that leads to death by blood loss.

Throughout history, there are many books about scurvy. What tormented the sailors of the Age of Exploration and the soldiers going to war was this as well.

Water-soluble vitamins dissolve from heat. And raw meat has lots of water-soluble vitamins. Inuits are eating raw meat to prevent scurvy as well.

In addition, the Inuits were never invaded. Because those regions have no value, according to the guide.

Why do they live there. I was curious about that, so I headed north.

However, when I arrived there were no Inuits.

It was written that Inuits are mongoloids, but the woman in front of me was without a doubt white. When I turned around to my guide, he was already gone.

“My, a visitor~”

“.....”

She spoke Finnish. I didn't think a subject I took out of whim in university would help.

When I looked at the passport I received from the guide, it was issued from somewhere else.

I was tricked again. I hung my head down.

“Did something happen? Are you hungry?”

I noticed that the woman in front of me kept talking to me.

“Erm, where is this?”

“This the village of the Sami people.”

“Sami.”

White hair, white skin. The woman who looked like a fairy smiled while holding a bloodied rabbit in her hand.

The place where the guide led me to was a relatively temperate village where people called ‘Sami’ lived.

Compared to the Inuits, who are said to have warm temperaments, the Sami had tough temperaments befitting the extreme cold.

However, from hearing their story of getting abused by outsiders, it felt natural that they would be cold to others.

The more I saw, heard and learned, the more I felt the harshness of the Sami.

However, the lord's daughter, Richelle was different.

She was broad-minded and kind to anyone.

It didn't take long for me to come to like her.

I married Richelle and had a child. Then I learned what it meant by my treasure.

I wanted to say thanks to that elderly lady who gave me an objective to travelling.

However, it took quite some time to get back to that village.

When I visited that village again after a few years, she was already gone from this world. It was just at her grave, but nevertheless I thanked her with Richelle that I was able to find my treasure.

I wasn't really reflecting about neglecting my son because I was confident that he will be a good lord.



I adequately cleaned up my research and presented them for a few years, then returned home.

When I got back home, my family greeted me.

I had five grandchildren already. It was decided that this old man who had no talent in hunting would do the babysitting.

It was the land of extreme cold, yet I felt warmth. The village was overflowing with treasure.

I thanked God for this miracle and vowed to enjoy this life.

Chapter 69 - Bonus Chapter: Extra — Afterstory

My room was taken over by father, and in was infested with books. There were books even on the bed. I was at a loss for words.

Within that, I found an old and used book. It was something like a travel guide written by an adventurer.

That adventurer went to many places and interacted with many peoples. What interested me the most was a hunting people called 'Inuits' that also lived in the extremely cold regions like us.

Like this village, they lived in the arctic circle but it is recorded that they live somewhere even colder.

Their prey are animals that live under the ice.

Their main source of food, seals, are shown to be long and slender. Seals are mammals, breathing through their lungs. They come above the ice to breath in air, so they hunt by aiming for that moment.

Other than that, narwhals, dolphins that have horns (to be exact, a fang protruding from the forehead) are also hunted. They too are hunted when they come above the ice to breath. Depending on the region, they hunt polar bears, rabbits or reindeers.

As for the culture, there are aspects that are similar, and those that are not. It seemed that cherishing children was similar all throughout the world.

I was most surprised about their sense of virtue.

When they go out for long periods to hunt, they leave their children and wives to other men. Then, if a husband does not come back from the hunt, the wife and children become the man's. Of course, hunting does risk one's life, but it's hard to believe that such a culture existed.

That was plenty surprising, but it also stated that it was not surprising for a husband to come back and be greeted by a pregnant wife. It seemed that such a thing was not that much of a big deal. Such custom came out of the thought that children are the treasure of the whole tribe.

"Or so I read."

"To think there would be a place colder than this village."

“Surprising, eh.”

Before dinner, I spent time with Sieg by talking about the ‘Inuits’.

Arno, maybe satisfied from getting milk, was looking up here.

“Though I don’t think I want to leave Sieg and Arno to anyone else.”

“Well, the world is wide.”

“Even so.”

“Well, it’s not easy to accept cultural differences.”

“Sieg, was it hard for you as well?”

“No, come to think of it, not really.”

I was worried if she holding many things in, but I felt relieved that she wasn’t.

While we were chatting, dinner was delivered to the table.

“Thank you for waiting~”

Mother served the dishes.

On days when Ruruporon was not here, mother prepared dinner for the day. When Sieg and I tried to help, she said, “Leave it to me~” and chased us out. Not just Ruruporon, it seems that people don’t like others messing with their cooking.

I put Arno to sleep in his cradle and then sat down.

Mother learned cooking from all over the world and was enjoying our reactions. The village women were also interested in foreign cooking methods, that she was opening a cooking class once a week.

Today, there were only dishes that I saw for the first time. Mother joyously started explaining.

“Today, we have shepherd’s salad ~”

Shepherd’s salad is a refreshing salad, made from many summer vegetables with a dressing made from herbs, oil, pepper and citrus juice. It seems that it was named so because shepherds ate this at ranches.

“Then we have ~ rustic red bean soup and wrapped reindeer meat and mushrooms!”

The red bean soup had a simple taste. It was good because the beans had a subtle sweetness. The wrapped dish was a top grade dish, made with a thin wrap, made from mixing flour with water, and herbs. The reindeer meat and mushrooms are wrapped in those and grilled. When I put a knife, it sliced easily. When I asked how the reindeer meat got so soft, she answered that she put the meat in yoghurt, a fermented dairy product. Apparently, this method is used often in foreign countries. Yoghurt was also used as sauce. It had a sour taste and deepened the meat’s flavour. It was a refreshing sauce that I never had before.

“Mother, what’s this?”

I said as I spread a black paste from a jar. It had an exotic flavour, but I quite liked its texture. I was curious as to what it was, so I asked mother.

“That’s cannabis spread ~”

“!?”

I heard her reply when I was swallowing it, and choked from hearing what it was.

“Ritz, that is made from the fruit, not from the leaves or the stalks. It doesn’t have poison.”

“I-I see. What a surprise!”

It seems that cannabis is a common ingredient in Sieg’s country.

“Ritchan, is it not good?”

“No, it is tasty.”

I fixed my posture and continued eating.

For dessert, we had raspberries that Sieg picked from the forest. It was sweet and sour.

The herb tea mother made from plants picked from the forest was handmade, but it was strangely bitter. I endured it thinking that it was medicine for my body.

“Mother-in-law, it was very delicious again today.”

“Good, good~. I’m glad it’s to Linde-chan’s liking!”

I was a bit worried about living together with mother, but it seems that there won’t be a problem. It seems that she is on friendly terms with Sieg as well.

After dinner, I bathed Arno.

First, I washed myself and then asked Sieg for a small bath for Arno.

The bath for the baby had a perfect temperature. Miruporon prepared it.

First, I put a towel on my lap and put Arno on top of that. I started from his hair, then washed his body, hands, feet and back. Does it tickle~? When I asked that, he giggled. Finally, when I put him in the bath, he looked so comfortable and pleased that I felt healed as well.

Looks like he’s warmed up enough, I thought and lifted him up. I properly dried him with a towel and put on baby clothes that were warmed up beforehand.

“A warm baby, coming right up!”

“Good work.”

Arno was handed over to Sieg and moved to his bedroom by his mother.

When I came out from the bathroom, Sieg handed me a towel.

“Thank you.”

Sieg and mother already bathed. Then all that’s left is to sleep.

I changed to my pyjamas and headed to my room.

“Ah, Ar-chan’s asleep now.”

“I see.”

Mother, who was gently patting Arno to sleep, said joyfully.

Mother said that she wanted to take care of Arno at night as well, but she doesn’t have milk so she couldn’t. I’m already very thankful that she’s helping us out during the daytime.

She disappointedly left Arno’s bedside. She bid goodnight and left the room. After that, Sieg came in.

She smiled faintly from seeing her son sleep peacefully and climbed into bed.

The moment Sieg rolled over here, I embraced her.

“We’re finally alone.”

“Right.”

We couldn’t really be lovey dovey in front of mother, so I could only touch Sieg at night.

Well, I was thinking that I should stop being so lovey dovey to Sieg since I’m a father, but at night the joy was double because I was holding back, so this is alright, I suppose.

“Arno, I think he can soon sleep until morning.”

“Really?”

Breastfeeding was done at least ten times a day. It’s easy to know since he cries when he’s hungry.

Day and night did not matter. So the mother usually suffered from lack of sleep. At the least, I woke up when Arno was crying for the diaper.

“It’s hard, raising a baby.”

“But there’s something very fulfilling about it.”

Indeed. Babies are cute, and it’s fun to watch how he was growing as well.

“We might have about four more children.”

“There you go again~”

I couldn’t imagine that I would be surrounded by five children sometime soon.

There’s no telling what might happen in life.

Chapter 70 - Bonus Chapter: Arno Salonen Revontulet's Activity Report

The morning of the remote village begins before sunrise.

I cleaned the doghouse and the reindeer pen and fed them. I checked how many more firewood we had. We were lacking, so I split some with an axe.

While I was working, someone talked to me from behind.

“Oniichan, it’s time for breakfast~”

The person standing behind me was my little sister Veronica, who is two years younger than me. I couldn’t sense her coming up to me so I got surprised.

“What is it?”

“That’s~”

She looked a bit troubled. It was because she failed to wake little brother Ulrich. He might have holed up in grandfather’s study and stayed up all night again.

After I went back inside, I headed not to the dining room but to Ulrich’s room.

He was curled up under his blanket, so I took the blanket off and shook him hard to wake him up.

“Ulrich, wake up already!”

“N~n.”

Weak in the morning, not waking up well, that part was similar to father. However, the fight with the half-unconscious Ulrich is easily settled by taking his pillow away.

“Wash your face and come to dining room.”

“.....Okay.”

I took Ulrich to the washing basin, and gave him the bitter powder for brushing the teeth, made specially by grandmother. Now he should be awake.

I thought it was okay now, but from a nearby room I heard a loud crash.

“Krimhilde!?”

The sound came from my little sister Krimhilde’s room. I could only get bad feelings, but I couldn’t possibly pretend to not have heard, so I headed there.

“Rim, I’m coming in!”

It’s a lady’s room, so I knocked before I entered. Though she’s only seven, she’s still a proper lady.

“W-Waa! Oniichan, good morning~. You’re up early again today~.....”

“.....”

I saw a ripped lace curtain and my little sister lying down on as if she gracefully landed on the cushion.

“Oi, how did this happen!?”

“Well~ I was hanging from the curtain, playing,”

“You idiot!”

Krimhilde is a girl, but she is the most energetic and mischievous of my siblings. Just how did this happen, I agonised.

In addition, Ulrich and Krimhilde are twins, but their personalities are strangely the opposite.

“Oniichan, I have a request!”

“I decline!”

“Eh, n-no way, you’re joking!?”

“You have to apologise this time.”

“No~! Tell me you’re joking~~”

Before, she climbed a tree and got a hole in her skirt. Because she was crying so much, thinking that she will be scolded harshly by mother, I got fabric that had the same colour and fixed them in secret. However, I don’t have the confidence to make lace products, so I declined it this time.

“How cruel~”

“It’s not cruel. You dug your own grave.”

“Still~ you don’t have to say that with such a scary face~”

“My face is innate!”

At this rate, my little sister will keep whining.

I picked up Krimhilde and carried her to where mother was. She was rolling over on the floor, so I had to check her for any bruises.

After I handed my little sister over to mother, I could finally go the dining room.

“Arno, morning.”

“Morning, dad.”

Father stood up and came over here with sleepy eyes, and kissed me on the cheek. It’s the usual daily greeting, but recently it’s become a bit embarrassing.

Though, if I say no, father makes a sad expression so I silently receive them.

Not too long later, the whole family came into the dining room. Mother came in last, with the youngest, Erenfried, and Krimhilde who was half in tears. Looks like little sister was scolded harshly. She needs to hold back a bit when she’s playing, or she’ll get hurt badly. Plus, she’s a girl, so I wish she acted a bit calmer.

When everyone was gathered, Miruporon served soup to our bowls.

The bowl got filled with cabbage and reindeer meat soup. I like both the pickled cabbage that was made in summer and the special soup that was boiled for a long time.

I put a salted herring on top of a thinly sliced rye bread and ate it. The refreshing flavour of the herb and the sour taste in the fish went well with the bread.

When the soup bowls got empty, Miruporn took them away. I bowed in thanks.

“Hey, Miru-chan, are you really alright~?”

“Yes, I recovered now.”

“I see. But take care of yourself.”

“Thank you.”

Grandmother said while looking at Miruporon worriedly.

Miruporon gave birth just a few months ago, but she returned to work a few days ago. Even as we saw her working energetically, everyone was worried. It seemed that the child was being taken care of by Ruruporon. Teoporon seemed excited, wanting to raise the child into a warrior or something. There, the usually energetic husband becomes really timid at home. I don't if I should feel pity or if I should be amused.

After breakfast, everyone went to do their own things.

Grandmother was going to do housework with Miruporon, while Veronica, Ulrich and Krimhilde was going to study with grandfather. I was going to go out hunting with mother.

Father was going to watch the house with Erenfried. Well, though I say watching the house, they still had something to do.

“Go~!”

Erenfried threw a rope with a ring on one end to a tree branch that was carved in the shape of a reindeer antler.

It's the first thing a child of this village learned. If this isn't done well, controlling a reindeer is hard so it's an important technique.

What's surprising here is father.

“Eren! You won't be able to reach the reindeer antler that way! Swing the rope stronger!”

“Muuuuu! Ey~!”

Father is usually fluffy, but when he's teaching he becomes strict. He's merciless even to the three-year-old Erenfried whom he usually dotes on.

I thought that the spoiled Erenfried might cry, “Dad's scary!” or something when he started training, but despite the tears he is trying his hardest everyday.

If he does it well, he'll be praised by father, mother, or grandparents, so he's doing it earnestly.

As I watched father and little brother's passionate class, mother came with dogs and guns.

We went out as the two house-sitters saw us off.

On the way, mother said that she had to visit the shop so I waited outside.

While waiting, I saw the door of the shop diagonally in front of me open. The person that came out was a girl three years younger than us. It's Airi, the daughter of Aina-san who runs an accessory•tailor shop.

The dogs got excited and tried to get to Aina, so I silently calmed them down.

Airi doesn't like dogs, but even still she approached even as she grimaced.

"Sorry. Are you alright?"

"Y-Yes."

".....?"

"....."

I thought that she had something to say to me, but Airi only fidgeted without saying anything.

"Are you going to help at the shop today?"

"It's not related to you."

"I see."

Airi's not very honest, as always. According to her mother, it's a disease that's cured as one naturally grows up, so she asked me to patiently hang out with her.

Well, it's cute compared to my little sisters or brothers.

Then, as she left, she silently handed me a paper bag. I could smell something sweet inside.

“Airi, this is..... Ah!”

When I was about to thank her, Airi had already ran off. Because I was scolded when I chased after her before, so I silently saw her off. It'd best to write a letter and place it on her room's window, like the usual.

A while later, mother came out of the room.

“I made you wait, Arno. Let's go.”

When I looked up at the sky, the bright sun was shining down on the snowy plains.

Until the polar nights where the sun does not rise come, we have to secure food from the forests. The hunting in this period is very important.

Some time ago, when father said that he's leaving the hunting this time to me, I was really happy. I resolved myself that I will hunt enough to fill my family's belly.

Like so, the hunting life of my family and me continued.